

Did you know that most recycled items in central Vermont end up at the **Materials Recovery Facility** (MRF), in Williston, VT? The rules about what we can recycle in central Vermont comes from state mandate (the **Statewide Six**) or from what can be processed at the MRF (pronounced "Murph").

Some recycling rules that seem odd at first (nothing smaller than 2" x 2" or larger than 2' x 2' can go in your recycling bin) make sense when you understand what happens to the MRF machinery or MRF staff who can get hurt by flying bottle caps.

For years certain items that seemed recyclable (think Pizza boxes) were not allowed in the bin based on recycling markets and the processing capabilities at the MRF. Recently, a few things have changed in Williston, which means more stuff that we in central Vermont can put in our bins!

The folks at the Chittenden Solid Waste District, who run the MRF, recently added some new items to the YES list for recyclables – and clarified some of the NO-NOs.

Here's the scoop on the new recyclables:

YES - these can now go in your recycling bin if you have single-sort recycling:

- **Fridge/frozen food boxes** are now accepted! That includes frozen dinners, frozen veggies, butter boxes, etc.

EXCLUSIONS: No paper-based ice cream or beverage/soup containers allowed (milk cartons, juice boxes, aseptic containers, etc.). The markets that buy our material don't want them due to the inevitable residue. As with all recyclables, no food is allowed.

Bakery boxes with or without plastic window are now accepted. Not recyclable if there's any food residue, crumbs, etc.

Pizza boxes: We can now accept them for recycling with a moderate amount of grease – but absolutely no crumbs or stuck-on food.

Thermal cash register receipts: These are the receipts you usually get at the gas pump and most retailers and restaurants. They were once considered unrecyclable due to the chemicals used for thermal printing. That's no longer an issue.

EXCLUSIONS: As with all recyclables, the paper must be **at least 2 inches long and wide**. Unused register paper of any kind that is still on a roll is not acceptable for two reasons: 1) The center spindles are typically made from plastic or a densified, non-recyclable cardboard. 2) If the unused paper is more than 2 feet long, it can come unspooled and wrap itself around equipment, causing tangling issues similar to filmy plastics, like grocery bags.

Paper ream wrap: When you buy a ream of printer paper, it comes wrapped in either paper or plastic. Paper wrap was once considered unrecyclable due to moisture-resistant treatment used to protect the paper inside. That is now not an issue. Copier paper wrap made of plastic is still NOT recyclable.

Jar lids: They're now recyclable in the blue bin! They must be separated from the containers they come on. The reason we couldn't recycle them before was that there are typically other materials on the underside to help make a tight seal. This is no longer an issue.

Foil tops on yogurt/drink containers: The reason that there's a question at all is that they are bonded with a thin layer of plastic for strength. As long as they are collected as part of a ball of foil at least 2 inches in diameter, these can be recycled in your bin. Otherwise, they act like paper in our sorting stream and are often erroneously mixed in with that stream.

And... a few NO-No's - continue to keep these items OUT of your recycling bin:

Bottle caps: Leave `em on or take `em off? Take `em off and save them for the CVSWMD [Additional Recyclables Collection Center](#). Caps on bottles are no-no's because:

- Bottles sealed with lids require more pressure from the bailer to crush into a bale, which wears out machinery sooner.
- People tend to toss bottles that still contain fluid into the recycling bin when they cap the bottle. Fluids are a huuge recycling no-no! Bottles need to be entirely empty of liquid (rinsed is even better!) before going in the bin.
- Plastic caps don't meet the 2-inch size minimum.
- Metal caps are recyclable at the [ARCC](#), NOT in the recycle bin. Plastic (and metal) lids larger than the 2-inch minimum can be recycled in the bin only if they are separated from the containers they came on.

Black Rigid Plastic: Here's what the folks at CSWD say about black plastic: "The global commodities market – where we sell the recyclables we collect – isn't buying black plastic. In recent years [the MRF](#) has had trouble selling bales containing black plastic at a high enough price to cover our processing costs. At times we couldn't even give them away. And because black plastic makes up a tiny fraction (0.06%) of the recycling stream, we decided to focus on maximizing the value of the other 99.94% of recyclables that come through our door. For these reasons, we no longer accept black plastic for recycling. Please reuse black plastic containers, **or place them in the trash.**"

For the more information about why black plastic is no longer accepted in recycling bin, [read more here](#).

Still have questions? [Email](#) us or call 802-229-9383 x102. CVSWMD staff are happy to give presentations about recycling, composting, reducing waste, or tips for reuse. Call to schedule your presentation today.