

Glossary

3rd Party Certification – Independent companies that have set up criteria to assess the environmental claims of various products. Products that have been certified by a third party (such as Green Seal, EcoLogo, or Design for the Environment) normally have the 3rd party's seal of approval on the product packaging. Household and commercial cleaners are a common product that is certified by 3rd parties.

Aerosol Products - A substance packed under pressure in a container with a spraying device.

Anaerobic – An environment devoid of free oxygen, which allows for the proliferation of anaerobic bacteria in a compost pile.

Aerobic bacteria – Bacteria that thrive in an environment with oxygen. Most commercial and home compost systems rely on aerobic bacteria to break down organic matter and turn it into compost.

Aerated Static Pile - Composting system that uses a series of perforated pipes (or equivalent) as an air distribution system running underneath a compost pile and connected to a blower that either draws or blows air through the piles. Little or no pile turning is performed.

Aseptic Packaging – Type of packaging commonly used for soy milk products and juice boxes. It is a composite packaging material made from paper, plastic and aluminum layers.

Automotive Products - A hazardous product category including waste motor oil, antifreeze, brake fluid, etc.

Bacteria - Group of single-cell micro-organisms, the smallest of the living organisms. Bacteria are found everywhere, in the soil, water and air.

Bale – Once separated, recyclable materials are compressed into rectangular bales which vary in size but are approximately one cubic yard in size. Bales weights vary, depending on what type of material they are made from but can range from a few hundred pounds to 1,500 lbs. or more. Garbage is sometimes baled to make it more efficient to transport to distant landfills.

Biodegrade - To decompose under natural conditions—the breakdown of a compound to simpler chemicals by microorganisms.

Biomimicry - Biomimicry or is the examination of nature, its models, systems, processes, and elements to emulate or take inspiration from in order to solve human problems. The term biomimicry comes from the Greek words bios, meaning life, and mimesis, meaning to imitate.

Bio-plastics - A growing amount of plastics is made from feedstocks that are grown, such as sugar cane or corn. Although bioplastics represent an important area of innovation, attention should be paid to their sustainability considerations (environmental, economic and social), such as water use, recyclability, the effects of farming, greenhouse gas emissions, food supply, and the cost of food. There are common misconceptions regarding bioplastics. Many people believe—incorrectly—that all bioplastics are biodegradable; however, the use of plant feedstocks does not necessarily lead to

biodegradable plastics. For example, PET plastic made from plant feedstocks has the same chemical formula as PET made from natural gas and oil feedstocks. Bio-based PET plastic is not biodegradable, but it is recyclable. The bioplastic PLA, on the other hand, can biodegrade in a commercial composting facility—but it likely will not be accepted in many of today's recycling programs.

Blister-Pack Product Packaging - Blister pack is a term for several types of pre-formed plastic packaging used for small consumer goods, foods, and for pharmaceuticals.

Bulk Buying – The practice of purchasing food and other products in loose form, without packaging.

Bulking Agent - Material, usually high in carbon such as sawdust, wood chips, or shredded yard trimmings added to a compost system to maintain airflow by preventing settling and compaction of waste.

Carbon:Nitrogen Ratio – The balance of carbon and nitrogen in an organic material. This ratio is an important factor in creating an environment that maximizes bacterial decomposition of organic waste.

Caution – As used on a product warning label. Indicates that the contents are toxic but level of toxicity is low. Ingesting products that contain more than an ounce can harm or produce a toxic effect in an adult.

Chasing Arrows - The “chasing arrows” symbol is the recognizable recycling symbol. Its intended use by manufacturers is to indicate that a product and/or its packaging is recyclable although it is often incorrectly used.

Closed Loop – A product that is continually recycled into the same product, for example glass bottles into glass bottles.

Commingling – A collection method where recyclable materials are collected together and separated manually or by special machinery.

Composite Material Packaging – Product packaging that is made from mixed-materials that are inseparable, such as milk cartons made of plastic-coated paper. Separating the paper from the plastic makes recycling such composites expensive.

Compost – Material formed from the decomposition of various forms of plant debris. Sometimes the word is used as a verb, to compost a material is to place it into environment that will cause it to decompose. Also, crumbly, earthy, sweet-smelling mixture of decomposing organic matter (e.g., leaves and food scraps) that is often used to improve the texture, water-retaining capacity, and aeration of soil.

Composting – A process that allows for the controlled biological decomposition of organic material.

Consumable Products – Products such as food and fuel that, when used, are permanently transformed into energy and/or waste product.

Consumerism - A doctrine advocating a continual increase in the consumption of goods as a basis for a sound economy.

Contaminant - A substance that contaminates (to make impure or unsuitable by contact or mixture with something unclean, bad, etc.). In the recycling and composting industries, contaminants are materials that should not have been placed in the recycling bin or yard debris carts.

Cullet – Broken or crushed glass suitable for remelting.

Curbside Collection – Garbage haulers pick up recyclables from residents same day as garbage. Containers are provided.

Curing - The last stage of composting that occurs after much of the readily metabolized material has been decomposed. Provides for additional stabilization, reduction of pathogens, and allows further decomposition of cellulose and lignin.

Danger – As used on a product warning label. Indicates the contents are highly toxic (less than a teaspoon can harm or kill an adult), corrosive (can burn the skin or the eyes), or flammable.

Degradable - Relating to a compound that breaks down into simpler compounds by stages.

Deposit System – The generic term for any recycling program that involves a deposit that is recouped (all or part) through participation in a qualified recycling program, e.g., beverage containers in Oregon or auto batteries

Dirty MRFs – A term for a material recovery facility that processes garbage to remove recyclable or compostable materials.

Disposable Products – Products such as paper and plastic dishware and utensils, batteries, etc., which are designed and produced for a one-time use and then become part of the waste stream.

Downstream Impacts - Energy and pollution associated with collection and transportation of waste and recyclables, leachate from MSW and ash landfills, methane and other air emissions from landfills, air emissions from waste incinerators, land, air, and water quality impacts of burning, stockpiling, and illegal dumping of garbage. While downstream impacts have negative environmental impacts as described above, upstream impacts are normally more environmentally destructive.

Dual Stream Sort – A collection method for recycling whereby most materials are mixed together but one or more items (i.e. glass or motor oil) are collected separately from the commingled (mixed) recycling.

Durable Products – Products such as clothing, furniture and tools that are designed to be used over and over again and can be maintained and repaired to insure longer life.

Environmentally Preferable Purchasing – Green procurement is the purchase of environmentally friendly products and services, the selection of contractors and the setting of environmental requirements in a contract. Green procurement stems from pollution prevention principles and

activities. Also known as green or environmental purchasing, green procurement compares price, technology, quality and the environmental impact of the product, service or contract. Green procurement policies are applicable to all organizations, regardless of size. Green procurement programs may be as simple as purchasing renewable energy or recycled office paper or more involved such as setting environmental requirements for suppliers and contractors.

E-waste – Electronics that are collected for recycling are considered e-waste.

Extended Producer Responsibility - Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is a mandatory type of product stewardship that includes, at a minimum, the requirement that the producer's responsibility for their product extends to post-consumer management of that product and its packaging. There are two related features of EPR policy: (1) shifting financial and management responsibility, with government oversight, upstream to the producer and away from the public sector; and (2) providing incentives to producers to incorporate environmental considerations into the design of their products and packaging.

Externalized Benefits - An external benefit is a benefit that someone gains because of someone else's action, outside of any market transaction between them. Immunizations give external benefits. When you get a vaccine for a certain disease, you make it less likely that you will contract the disease. That is the internal benefit. What you also do is make it less likely that other people will get the disease, because they probably will not catch it from you. That is the external benefit.

Externalized Costs - Externalized costs are negative impacts associated with economic transactions which concern people outside of those transactions, meaning that neither the buyer nor the seller bears the brunt of the costs. An example is factory pollution, which can have a negative influence on the surrounding community.

Flammables – Products that are easily set on fire; combustible.

Generation Rate – This is a measurement of everything that is disposed, recycled or composted. It is a measure of how much society consumes.

Grasscycling – Leaving cut clippings on the lawn as a natural way to return nutrients to the lawn. It is a source reduction activity in which grass clippings are left on the lawn after mowing. The practice consists of mowing grass so it is never more than two to three inches tall. The grass clippings are left where they fall and allowed to decompose, returning nutrients to the lawn.

Green Building - Green building is the practice of creating structures and using processes that are environmentally responsible and resource-efficient throughout a building's life-cycle from siting to design, construction, operation, maintenance, renovation and deconstruction. This practice expands and complements the classical building design concerns of economy, utility, durability, and comfort. Green building is also known as a sustainable or high performance building.

Green Marketing – A style of marketing that makes packages and products look “green” or environmentally friendly to the consumer.

Green Team - Green teams are dedicated groups of employees, regardless of discipline or organizational level, which facilitate the pragmatic implementation of sustainable operations

principles at their organization. Schools, businesses and places of worship can all have green teams. Green teams range from the informal - a few employees working together to increase recycling opportunities for themselves and their community, to the formal - a group specifically chartered by leadership to promote and foster sustainable operations that reduce a unit's environmental footprint. Green teams are often "place-based", meaning that the issues they choose to work on are meaningful to their specific community and geographic location.

Green Washing - Greenwashing (a compound word modeled on "whitewash"), is a form of spin in which green PR or green marketing is deceptively used to promote the perception that an organization's aims and policies are environmentally friendly. Whether it is to increase profits or gain political support, greenwashing may be used to manipulate popular opinion to support otherwise questionable aims.

Hazardous Products – A term applied to those products that because of their chemical reactivity, toxic, explosive, corrosive, radioactive or other characteristics, cause danger, or are likely to cause danger, to health or the environment.

Herbicide - A hazardous product category that describes products intended to kill unwanted plants. Includes Weed and Feed lawn products, Diazanone, Moss killers, Round up and other weed killers.

Holding Unit – A simple container used to store yard and garden waste in an organized way until these materials break down or are needed in an active compost pile.

Household hazardous waste (HHW) - Small quantities of unused or leftover hazardous products used in the home that become waste. Paints, pesticides, and some cleaners are examples of household hazardous waste. Caution must be taken when handling, storing, or disposing of these products.

Household Hazardous Waste Site – A collection facility that accepts hazardous materials from the public and then disposes of the waste safely. There are approximately 8 hazardous waste facilities in Oregon. In rural areas that do not have easy access to a hazardous waste facility, periodic collection events are scheduled to safely manage these materials.

Humus - The dark-brown or black substance resulting from the slow decomposition and oxidization of organic matter on or near the surface of the earth, which, with the products of the decomposition of various rocks, forms the soil in which plants grow.

Incineration – The process of burning solid waste under controlled conditions to reduce its weight and volume, and often to produce energy. Facilities that use the heat to generate energy are called waste-to-energy facilities.

Inorganic - Substance in which carbon-to-carbon bonds are absent; mineral matter.

Integrated Waste Management – A system combining several alternatives for solid waste management, including recycling, composting and disposal options such as landfilling.

KRAFT - A strong, usually brown paper processed from wood pulp, used chiefly for grocery bags and as wrapping paper. Usually it is recycled with the similarly made corrugated cardboard fibers.

Landfill - A waste disposal site for the deposit of solid waste (or ashes that result from incineration). Also, an engineered disposal site where solid wastes are deposited, compacted to the smallest practical volume, and covered by soil or other material applied at the end of each operating day. Hazardous wastes are taken to special disposal sites selected and designed to minimize the chance of releasing hazardous substances into the environment. Many larger landfills have methane capture systems to reduce the amount of methane (a powerful greenhouse gas) from entering the atmosphere. The methane is burned to generate electricity and to eliminate the methane gas.

Leachate - Liquid that has seeped through solid waste in a landfill and has extracted soluble, dissolved or suspended materials in the process.

Life-Cycle Analysis – Analyzes the total environmental impacts of a specific product or product category, including energy use, air pollution and water pollution. This analysis tracks every stage of the products life, including mining, manufacturing, transportation, use and disposal.

Material Recovery Facility (MRF) – A facility that manually and/or mechanically separates recyclable materials out of mixed waste. The remainder of the waste is sent to the landfill.

Mixed Waste Processing - Central facility for inspecting and sorting commingled waste materials generally for the purpose of recovering materials of value for recycling. Same as a material recovery facility (MRF).

Mobius Loop – This “chasing arrows” symbol inside a circle is supposed to be used by manufacturers to indicate that a product and/or its packaging is made from recycled content.

Mulch – Organic material (wood chips, sawdust, etc.) placed on the soil surface to control weeds, lessen evaporation and stop soil erosion.

Municipal Solid Waste - Wastes such as durable goods, disposable goods, containers and packaging, food scraps, yard trimmings, and miscellaneous inorganic wastes from households, certain commercial establishments (e.g., businesses or restaurants), institutions (e.g., schools or hospitals), and some industrial sources. It does not include nonhazardous industrial wastes, sewage, agricultural waste, hazardous waste, or construction and demolition waste. Also known as garbage, trash, refuse, or debris.

NIMBY – An acronym for the “Not in My Back Yard” syndrome when neighborhoods fight against the placement of unwanted facilities near their homes, like landfills or waste processing facilities.

Nonpoint-Source Pollution – Undefined sources of water pollution, such as street runoff, erosion from construction and agricultural areas, etc.

Nonrenewable Resources – Resources not capable of being naturally restored or replenished or that are replaced more slowly than they are used such as oil, iron ore or uranium.

Organic Matter – Plant and animal residue that decomposes and becomes a part of the soil.

Pesticides – A hazardous product category that describes products intended to kill a pest. Includes insecticides, mothballs, fungicides etc.

Planned Obsolescence – Designing a product to become obsolete because of fashion or function with other elements, not because it is worn out. This practice is most common in computers and software, clothing, sporting equipment, home interiors and automobiles.

Point-Source Pollution – Water pollution sources that may be traced to a specific source, such as sewer line or a discharge pipe of an industrial facility.

Polishes and Waxes - A hazardous product category including floor wax, furniture and shoe polish, auto wax, nail polish, etc.

Post-Consumer Material – Material generated by a consumer or business that has served its intended use and has been separated or diverted from solid waste for the purpose of recycling, collection or disposal. Post-consumer does not include manufacturing waste. Recycling done at home is considered post-consumer material.

Pre-Consumer Material – Material such as factory trimmings, damaged or obsolete products, and overruns, which are generated by manufacturers. Such materials have been recycled for years.

Precycling – The practice of reducing or avoiding waste before it enters the home by prethinking your purchase based on packaging waste; one of the most effective ways to decrease household garbage.

Product Stewardship - Product Stewardship is the act of minimizing health, safety, environmental and social impacts, and maximizing economic benefits of a product and its packaging throughout all lifecycle stages. The producer of the product has the greatest ability to minimize adverse impacts, but other stakeholders, such as suppliers, retailers, and consumers, also play a role. Stewardship can be either voluntary or required by law.

Recovered Material – Materials and byproducts that have been recovered from solid waste. Industrial scrap is not considered recovered because the materials and byproducts are commonly reused within the industrial system. This is a broad term, which covers both pre-consumer and post-consumer materials.

Recyclable – A product or package that can be collected, separated or recovered from the waste stream for use as a raw material in the manufacture or assembly of a new package or product. Also, material that still has useful physical or chemical properties after serving its original purpose and can be reused or remanufactured to make new products. Plastic, paper, glass, steel and aluminum cans, and used oil are examples of recyclable materials.

Refurbish - To repair, clean, and make useful again. Some electronic manufacturing companies and other businesses take back used equipment, refurbish it, and sell it again.

Recovery Rates – A measurement of everything that is recycled and composted as a percentage of everything that was generated (garbage + recycling + composting). In recent years, Oregon's

recovery rate has hovered around 50%, meaning that approximately half of all of Oregonian's waste was composted or recycled and half was landfilled or incinerated.

Recycled Content – The portion of a product or package that contains materials that have been recovered or otherwise diverted from the solid waste stream either during the manufacturing process or after consumer use.

Recycled Material – Material that has been separated from the waste stream, reprocessed into a new product, often taking the place of virgin material.

Recycled Products – (as defined by the State of Oregon for internal purchasing definitions) Materials, goods or supplies in which at least 50% of the total weight of the item is made out of secondary and post-consumer waste. Also 10% of the item's total weight must be made from post-consumer waste. Recycled products include remanufactured products. A less prescriptive definition is any product that contains any recycled content.

Recycling – Systems that collect, process and market individual materials from the waste stream to be manufactured into new products, such as paper, glass, metals, or motor oil. Also, collecting, sorting, processing, and converting materials that would have been thrown away into raw materials used to make the same or new products.

Renewable Resources – Capable of being naturally restored or replenished.

Reuse – Methods by which existing materials can be put back to their intended use.

Selective Shopping – When buying something new, selecting the product and package carefully in order to minimize waste.

Sewage Treatment Plant - Facility that uses physical, chemical and biological processes to remove organic matter, bacteria, viruses and solids from residential, commercial and industrial wastewaters before they are discharged in rivers, lakes and seas.

Soil Amendment - A substance added to the soil to improve its physical properties as a growing medium (e.g. compost).

Source Reduction - Any change in the design, manufacture, purchase, or use of materials or products (including packaging) to reduce their volume or amount or toxicity before they become municipal solid waste. Source reduction also refers to the reuse of products or materials.

Source Separation – Recyclables are segregated from other wastes at the point of generation – at home or at work – and are collected separately. Often used to refer to the systems that sort recycling by material type as opposed to the common co-mingling systems.

Superfund - The federal government's program to locate, investigate and clean up the worst uncontrolled and abandoned toxic waste sites nationwide; administered by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Sustainable – The ability to support, endure or keep up economically and socially without depleting or damaging resources.

Tipping Fee – The amount that the public and garbage haulers pay to dump garbage and compost at transfer stations, landfills, waste-to-energy facilities, or composting facilities. Occasionally if market prices are low, garbage haulers have to pay tipping fees to drop off recyclables.

Top Dressing – Using compost to mulch around flower and vegetable plants, shrubs and trees.

Toxic/Poison – A chemical or mixture of chemicals that presents a high risk of injury to human health, safety or to the environment.

Transfer Station - A place where garbage, yard debris and/or recycling are collected and compressed, baled, and loaded onto vehicles for more efficient transport to disposal or recycling sites.

Trash - Items that are discarded because they no longer work and are uneconomical or impossible to reuse, repair, recycle or compost.

Turning Unit – Typically a series of bins or a horizontally mounted rotation barrel used for building and turning hot compost piles.

Upstream Impacts - The environmental costs associated with the production and distribution of products before the consumer purchases them. Environmentally, most products have much larger upstream costs than downstream costs. Examples include extraction and harvesting of raw materials, energy and water used for manufacturing of primary materials and fabrication of products/packages, pollution released as a consequence of off-site energy consumption, pollution released from manufacturing processes and energy and pollution associated with transportation of raw materials and products.

Upstream Processes - Extracting raw materials and converting them to products.

Vermi-compost – High quality “castings” left behind in worm composting bins.

Warning – As used on a product warning label. Indicates the contents are moderately toxic (a teaspoon to an ounce can harm or kill an adult).

Waste Audit – A way to assist individuals and businesses in determining how they can reduce waste, both that they generate and receive from other sources, to help protect the environment and save money. Sometimes called a waste assessment.

Waste Exchange – A system where one person or company's waste becomes a resource for another person or business.

Waste Generation Rate - The weight and proportion of materials and products as they enter the waste management system from residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial sources and before materials recovery or combustion takes place. This includes everything that is composted, recycled and discarded as garbage.

Waste Prevention - The reduction of the quantity and harmfulness for the environment of materials and substances at the marketing, distribution, utilization and elimination stages, in particular by developing 'clean' products and technology.

Waste Reduction - Methods used by the generator of waste to reduce the amount of solid waste requiring recycling, composting, incineration or disposal. "Reduce" is the first and most important of the 3 R's.

Waste Stream - The total flow of solid waste from homes, businesses, institutions and manufacturing plants that is recycled, burned, or disposed of in landfills, or segments thereof such as the 'residential waste stream' or the 'recyclable waste stream.'

Waste to Energy Facility – A facility that burns mixed solid waste to reduce its volume and extract energy as heat and/or electricity.

Windrow System - Composting mixture is placed in elongated piles, called windrows. These windrows are aerated naturally by a chimney effect, by mechanically turning the piles with a machine such as a front-end loader or specially designed equipment, and/or by forced aeration.

Worm Castings - Earthworm excrement. Worm castings appear dark and granular like soil, and are rich in soil nutrients.

Yard Debris - Grass clippings, leaves and weeds, and shrub and tree prunings six inches or less in diameter, from residences and businesses.