

Sustainability: Recycling and Waste Reduction

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Department of Environment & Sustainability

- Mission: To foster healthy, resilient and thriving communities by improving the quality of life, protecting the natural environment and promoting sustainability and environmental justice for all Cook County residents and stakeholders.
- We do this through a variety of methods including providing information about **waste reduction** and **recycling right**.

Household waste

In 2018 292.4 million tons of waste was generated in the United States.

Where it goes	How much (million tons)	% of total
Recycle	69.1	23.6%
Compost	24.9	8.5%
Burn for energy	34.6	11.8%
Landfill	146.2	50%

Almost half of the materials (70.6 million tons) going to the landfill could be recycled.

Material	How much (million tons)	% of total
Paper/Paperboard	33.8	23.1%
Metals	12.9	8.8%
Glass	6.1	4.2%
Plastics	17.8	12.2%

Household waste in Cook County

- In 2016, Cook County municipal waste hauler data indicated that haulers collected an estimated:
 - **8.2 pounds per household per day of waste**
 - **1.87 pounds per household per day of recyclable materials.**

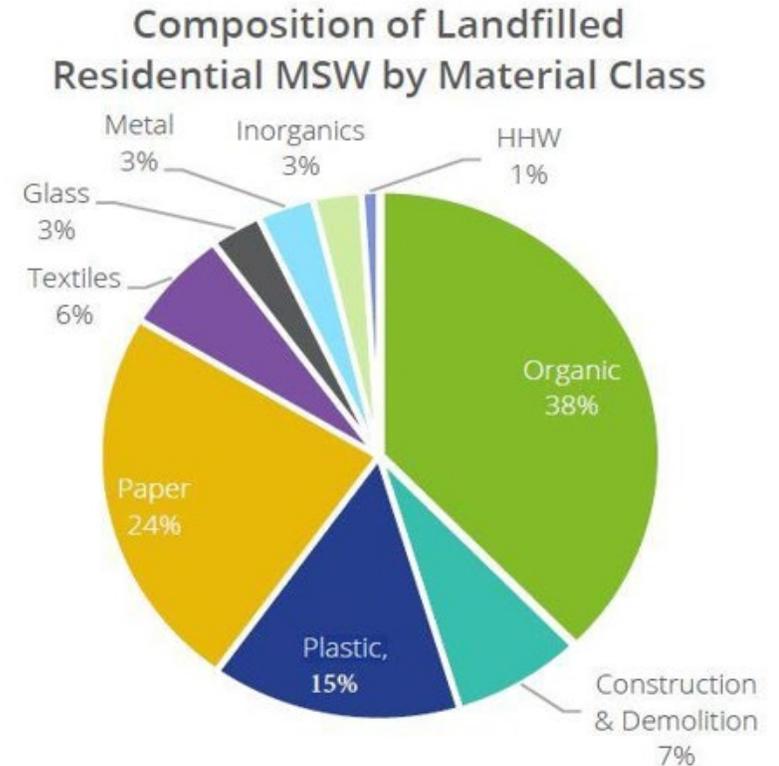


Figure 2: Waste Characterization for Res. municipal solid waste by Materials Class. Source: Cook County Commodity/Waste Generation and Characterization Study, 2014

Household Waste: Where does the trash go?

The landfill

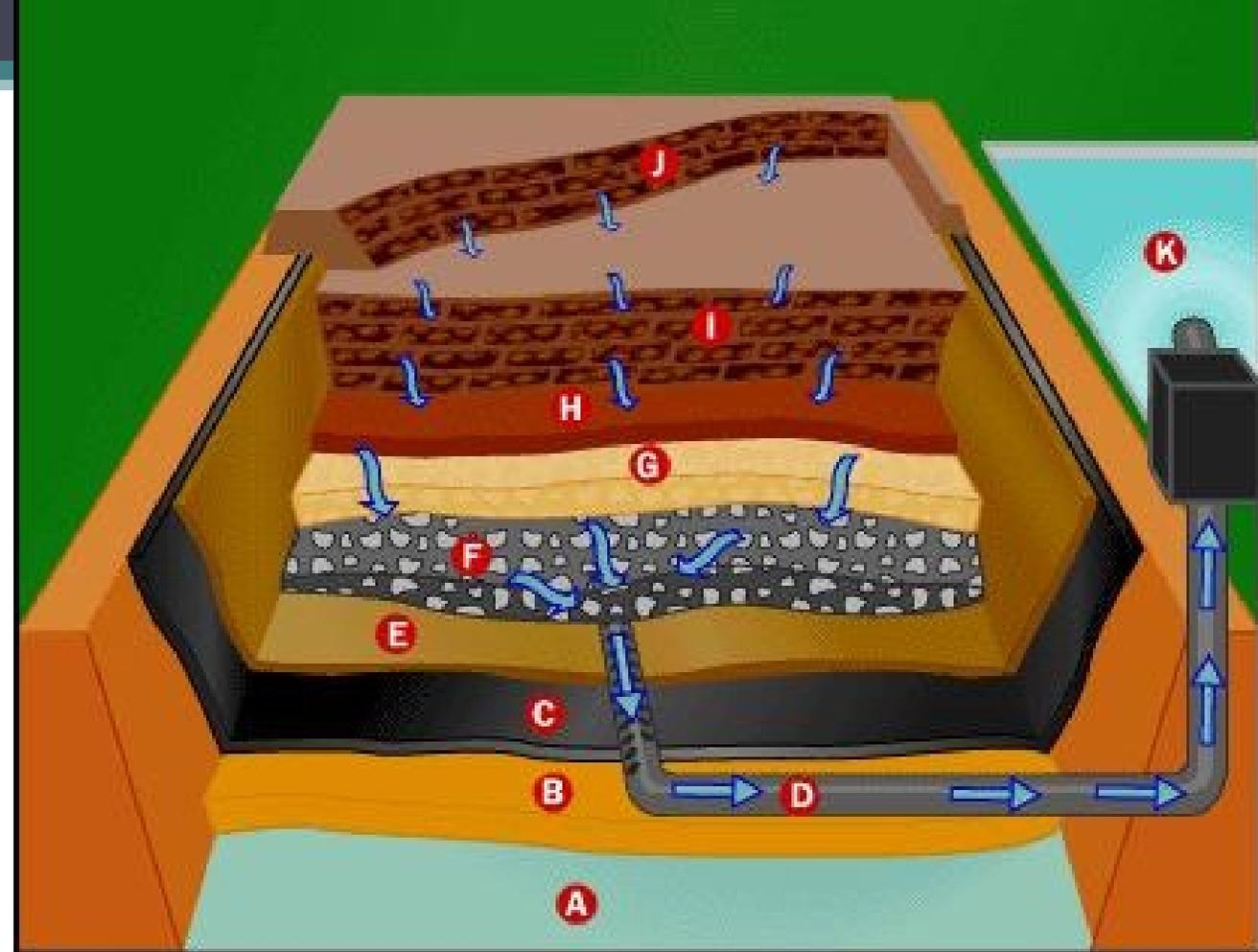


How does the landfill work?

The landfill is designed with many layers to help keep the waste and byproducts inside of the landfill instead escaping into the surrounding soil and water.

There are 2 main byproducts from landfills:

- Leachate
- Methane



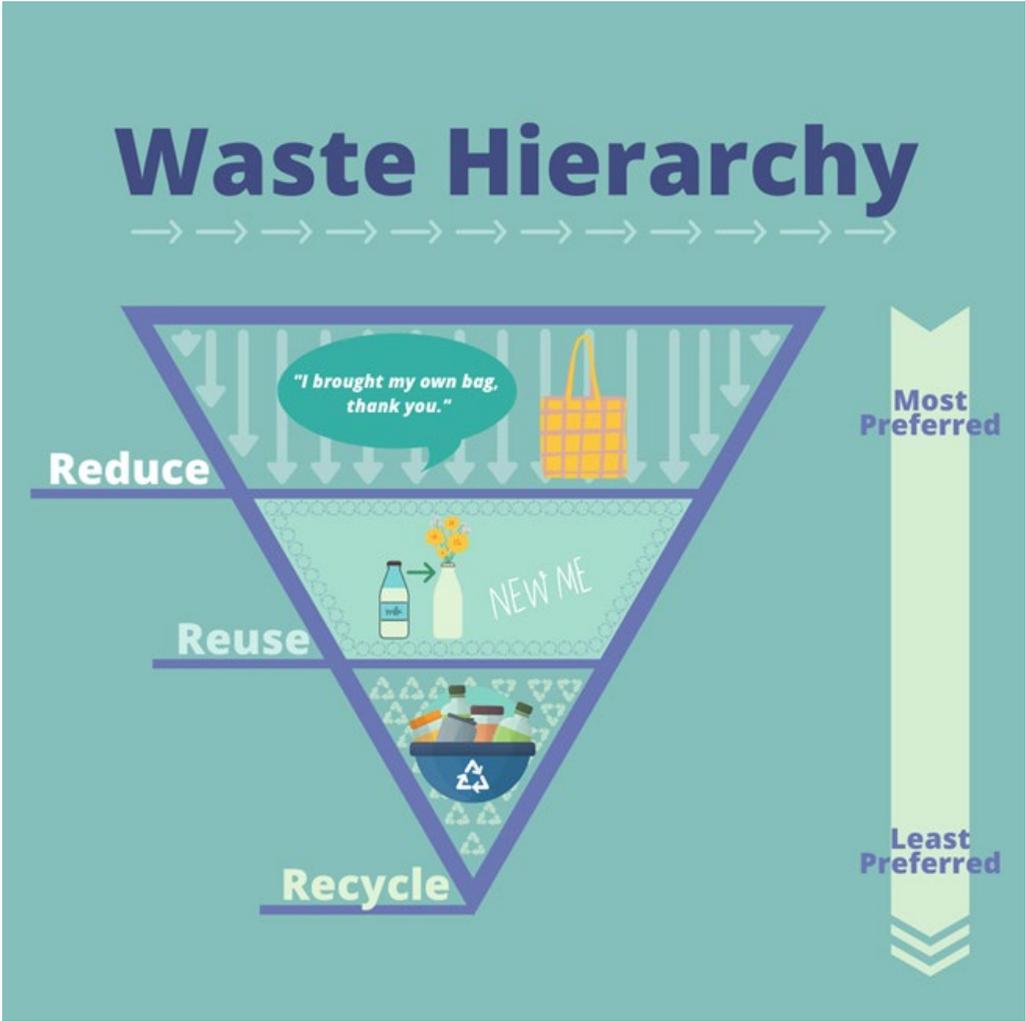
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| A Ground Water | G Drainage Layer |
| B Compacted Clay | H Soil Layer |
| C Plastic Liner | I Old Cells |
| D Leachate Collection Pipe | J New Cells |
| E Geotextile Mat | K Leachate Pond |
| F Gravel | |

Landfill Byproducts

- Leachate: formed when rain water filters through the waste in a landfill. When the water and other liquids come in contact with buried waste, it leaches or draws out chemicals or constituents from the waste.
- Methane: a colorless, odorless, flammable gas that is a main part of natural gas.

Both byproducts are harmful to the environment and can be harmful to humans and wildlife.

The 3 R's can make a big difference in our communities and for our environment.



Reduce

Make less trash and use fewer natural resources.



Source: Tamara Smith

- What to do with food waste?
 - Food scrap pick up
 - Composting outside or worm composting inside

- 1 Select a dry, shady spot near a water source.**
Ideal size for your compost area is 3 feet wide by 3 feet deep by 3 feet tall (1 cubic yard). You can buy a bin, use chicken wire, or just isolate an area of ground for your compost heap.
- 2 Add brown and green material in alternate layers.**
Try and keep the ratio roughly 3 parts browns to 1 part greens. Make sure larger pieces of material are chopped or shredded.
- 3 Keep the compost moist [but not too wet].**
Moisture helps with the breakdown of organic matter.
- 4 Occasionally turn your compost mixture to provide aeration.**
This helps speed up the composting process and keeps things airy, which cuts the risk of things getting smelly.
- 5 As materials breakdown, the pile will get warm.**
There might even be steam. Don't be alarmed. That means it's working. Now you just have to wait.
- 6 All done!**
When material is dark with no remnants of food or waste, your compost is ready. Add it to lawns and gardens or anywhere that could benefit from some good soil.

What's vermicomposting?
Vermicomposting is a type of composting that uses red wiggler earthworms (*Eisenia fetida*) to break down organic material. Place worms in a container 8-16 inches deep, layered with dirt, newspaper, and leaves. Make sure the bin has small holes at the bottom (a quarter inch or smaller) to allow for ventilation and drainage. Fruit and vegetable waste will eventually be replaced with nutrient-rich excrement. This method requires far less space, so it's a good alternative for people who don't have enough room or the ideal conditions for a large compost pile.

Reuse

Use things again and again if possible.



Recycle

Make new things from trash instead of using new natural resources.



RECYCLING GUIDELINES

YES!

Clean & Empty
Replace lids & caps



METAL

Steel & Aluminum Containers and Foil



PAPER

Cardboard (flattened),
Office Paper, Newspaper, Magazines



GLASS

Containers: Bottles & Jars Only



PLASTIC

Containers: Bottles, Tubs, Jugs,
and Jars Only



CARTONS

May be acceptable in some
programs, check with
local authority.

NO!

**Put material in loose
- Not in Bags**



No Plastic Bags
No Product Wrap
(return clean to retailer)



No Big Items (Electronics, Wood,
Propane Tanks, Scrap Metal or Styrofoam -
check with local authority for other options)



No Tangles (Hangers, Hoses,
Wire, Cords, Ropes or Chains)



No Clothing
Textiles or Shoes (donate)



**No Food, Liquid, Diapers,
Batteries or Needles**



No Shredded Paper
(check with local authority
for other recycling options)

These Guidelines represent the common items accepted in most recycling programs in Illinois.
For greater detail on specific items or programmatic variations, reach out to your local authority.

To find out more detail, including recycling and reuse programs beyond the bin, visit <https://www2.illinois.gov/epa/topics/waste-management/Pages/recycling.aspx>, or contact the
Department of Environment and Sustainability at 312-603-8200



What can we Recycle?



Paper



Cartons may be accepted,
check with your municipality



Metal



Glass



Plastic

What ALWAYS has to go to the landfill?



Styrofoam



Plastic Bags, unless you take them back to the store!



Food Contaminated Items like Pizza Boxes



Shredded paper



Clothing, unless it's donated



Tanglers

Household Recycling: Where does it go?

To the Materials Recovery Facility or MRF



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- Green Guide Library:
 - <https://www.cookcountylil.gov/content/green-guide-library>
- Important items related to COVID-19:
 - Gloves and masks aren't recyclable, do not place them in your recycling bin
 - Make sure to check with electronic waste recycling centers before dropping items off. Many have reduced hours or are currently closed.



Conserve
Cook County

Take the pledge to Conserve Cook County

To learn more about the pledge and to take it go to:
<https://www.cookcountyil.gov/conservcook>

This new resource focuses on simple actions that we can all take to curb emissions in the main areas our carbon is coming from.

Do this by reducing plastic waste and energy use.

By using fewer resources, we create fewer emissions.



Questions?

Contact Information:

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SWANCC Recycling locations:

<https://swancc.org/recycling-directory/recycle>

Morton Grove Recycling:

<https://www.mortongroveil.org/services/garbage-and-recycling/>