

Energy and Recycling Committee (ERC) News

Our goal is to increase municipal recycling from our current rate of 29% to 35% by 2017 and 40% by 2019

Recycling Dos and Don'ts

Every day, we make decisions about how to dispose of the waste we generate. While our single sort recycling system allows us to put all of our recyclables into one bin, learning and remembering the basic dos and don'ts of what can go in that bin can take some time. Many of us on the City of South Portland Energy and Recycling Committee (ERC) have found ourselves holding an item in our hands, asking, "can I recycle this or not?" More often than not, if the answer is not at our fingertips, that item will end up in the trash. This may be one of the reasons that 50% of household trash still consists of recyclable material. As you may have heard, the ERC has set a goal to increase the municipal recycling rate from 29% to 35% by 2017. Part of our job as members of the ERC is to encourage more residents to recycle more of their waste and to make it easy to do so. Even after we've mastered the basics and have a handy reminder magnet from ecomaine (South Portland's trash and recycling processor) which lists recycling dos and don'ts, questions still remain. We are here to help.

DO recycle the following:

- Cardboard to-go coffee cups (including paper sleeves & plastic tops)
- Pizza boxes & paper plates (lightly soiled or clean)
- Empty juice, milk, soy & almond milk cartons (with plastic spout ok), juice boxes
- Envelopes with plastic windows
- Junk mail, including plastic credit cards

It is also important to understand what cannot be recycled and should never go into the recycling bin. A general rule of thumb is that nothing bigger than a 5 gallon bucket should be recycled. Some items and materials can even be dangerous or damaging to ecomaine staff and machinery if they end up in the recycling sorting facility. The following list contains some of the more dangerous or damaging items that have shown up at the recycling facility in the past and should never go into the recycling bin.

DO NOT recycle the following:

- Propane tanks – can explode, endangering staff!
- Rope, cords, holiday/party lights, garden hoses – get wrapped around machinery & shut down operations
- Lumber and wood – can get jammed in machinery
- Electronic Waste (computers, TV's, air conditioning units, etc.)
- Plastic film – gets wrapped around machinery & shuts down operations.

These are items that pose safety concerns and affect the functioning of our recycling facility. Contact ecomaine or the Public Works Department of the City to find out how to dispose of these items properly. We hope this guide will help us reach our goals of an increased recycling rate and a more sustainable South Portland. If you have any questions about trash and recycling contact ecomaine or check out their website <http://www.ecomaine.org>. Staff and educators are very responsive to questions and comments. Please feel free to attend any meeting of the Energy and Recycling Committee which meets the third Wednesday of the month at 6:30 pm at the Community Center (but no meeting in August).