

Dirty Recyclables Hampering Recycling in Ireland

- Quality and cleanliness of materials a key issue for recycling
- 1/5th of people putting unrinsed bottles in recycling bins
- Nearly 20,000 tonnes of materials from green bins annually are potentially dumped due to contamination
- 46% of people not recycling regularly from outside the kitchen
- Good quality material can attract up to double the value of contaminated material.
- Over 500,000 leaflets to be distributed through Repak supported waste contractors to help inform people about what can be recycled.
- Repak Recycling week theme is to “Recycle more and Recycle Better”
- Repak targeting 18,000 tonnes of used packaging for period of Repak Recycling Week

(11.10.09) Recycling in Ireland is being hampered by poor recycling habits with 63% of people claiming not to rinse out their takeaway containers before putting them in their recycling bin according to research by Repak. The research, which looked at the recycling habits of 1,000 people in Ireland, as part of Repak Recycling Week, also uncovered that 46% of people do not rinse out their milk and juice containers. The impact of such behaviour is the contamination of dry recyclables such as paper and cardboard from the residues in unwashed/unrinsed containers. The study also showed that in addition to not cleaning out recyclables many people are putting incorrect items in their recycling bins with 20% openly admitting putting in used tissue papers in the green/blue recycling bins, 9% reporting putting in garden waste while another 12% put in used clothes and shoes.

Repak estimates that annually approximately 20,000 tonnes of incorrect material is put into recycling bins which is taking up valuable place in recycling bins as well as potentially contaminating other recyclables. This is further compounded by people not correctly cleaning or washing out their recyclables, for example 49% are not cleaning out their sauce and jam jars and 19% putting in unrinsed bottles.

Commenting Dr. Andrew Hetherington, CEO Repak said “Recycling in Ireland has reached the stage where 97% of people claim to recycle regularly and last year 65% of all used packaging

was recycled. While this is positive two key issues remain – how people treat their used packaging and what items they put into their recycling bins.”

Mr Hetherington also added “As the collapse of the international recycling market last year showed the quality of recyclables is hugely important. Contaminated used packaging devalues the material, can undo the great efforts of householders and could potentially lead to an increase in recycling costs for householders. Good quality material can attract up to double the value of contaminated material. Material that should not be in the recycling bin also hampers the recycling efforts adding to complexity and cost. Our theme this year is ‘Recycle More, Recycle Better’ and the message is clear. Help us by cleaning and rinsing out your recyclables and thoroughly check with your waste collector if an item is supposed to go in your recycling bin or bin before putting them.”

On the positive side people are responding well to the message to recycle more from around the house with 54% of people recycling regularly from the bathrooms (up 6% on last year) but this is still far from the 99% rate recorded for the kitchen. Also positive is the 42% of people who now claim recycling is part of everyday household routine while 38% feel motivated to recycle as ‘its is a good thing’.

Plastic drinks bottles topped the table of claimed recycled items at 87% up from 75% in 2006, followed by glass containers at 83% and cardboard at 79%. However on the downside 43% do not recycle their foil takeaway trays, 40% do not recycle their biscuit/sweet tins and 37% are not recycling their detergent bottles.

The best claimed recyclers in the country were in Dublin with an average stated recycling rate of 58% versus 33% in Cork. Men and women have reached parity in relation to their recycling behaviour with no major difference between the sexes in recycling behaviour.

Education continues to be an important issue for people with only 50% saying they were very confident they knew all the items that could be recycled while 12% simply put items they are unsure of in their recycling bin. When seeking information on recycling, friends and family act as the main reference point for 21% of people, followed by recycling company and newspapers at 17%. The internet has increased in importance as a reference point for information but still only for 15% of people.

In order to help people “Recycle More and Recycle Better” Repak is rolling out a series of initiatives over the course of Repak Recycling Week including.

- Major radio and on line advertising awareness campaign.
- Organise schools colouring competition and class activity program for the week through the Green School programme.
- Launch a new consumer focused website www.RecycleMore.ie featuring multimedia and social media photos, videos, hints, tricks, posters, blog posts and tips for recycling in the Home, Office and School.
- Distribute posters and leaflets detailing common packaging items (often forgotten) that can be recycled to local libraries and colleges running recycling events.
- Produced and distribute leaflets in conjunction with Local Authorities and private contractors to educate people on how to recycle more and recycle better through their existing green bins.
- Feature new videos, pictures, competitions on Bebo, Facebook, YouTube, Pix.ie and updates on Twitter.
- Launch of “Recycling Moments” photo competition. Public invited to email colourful photos showing recycling to laura.byrne@repak.ie. Photos will be uploaded to <http://pix.ie/repak> and winners announced on www.recyclemore.ie.
- Announce the winners of the 8th Annual Repak Awards which takes place on Thursday the 15th of October in Croke Park, Dublin. The lunchtime awards recognise the efforts and ingenuity of its Industry Members, Local Authorities and Collectors in the area of packaging prevention, reuse and recycling.

About Repak

- Repak is a not for profit producer responsibility scheme for used packaging funded by packaging levies charged to participating members companies.
- Since 1997 Repak has invested €160 million in supporting packaging recycling in Ireland.
- In total Repak have diverted over 4.4 million tonnes of used packaging from landfill since 1998.

- Repak have helped grow packaging recycling from under 15% in 1998 to nearly 65% in 2008.