

GLOSSARY OF RECYCLING TERMS

Alternative Energy: Renewable energy sources, such as wind, water, and solar energy, that generally create less environmental damage and pollution than fossil fuels.

Bale: A compacted and tied cube of recyclable material such as paper, scrap metal, or plastic bottles. A bale can weigh hundreds of pounds.

Bauxite: The ore from which most aluminum is made, usually mined from rainforest areas.

Biodegradable: Organic material capable of being broken down chemically by bacteria.

Biota: All living organisms (plants, animals, fungi, bacteria, etc.)

Blue Bin: The container you fill with recyclables and put out to the curb every week. Need a new one? [Click here](#)



Bottle Bill: A term for a container deposit law. New York currently has a 5¢ deposit law for all carbonated beverages AND water bottles.



Compact Fluorescent Lightbulb (CFL): Spiral-shaped bulbs that can be used in place of an incandescent bulb. CFLs are more energy efficient and can last much longer than incandescents. They contain mercury, however and must be [disposed of properly](#).

Compost: The rich organic product created by composting. Refers to an enriched product that, when added to soil, increases its nutrient value. [Click here for information on OCRRA's compost](#)

Composting: Biodegradation of organic matter, such as yard and food waste, that creates compost to be used on gardens. Decomposition is performed mostly by bacteria, but also yeasts and fungi.

Conservation: The wise use of natural resources (nutrients, minerals, water, plants, animal, etc.).

Corrugated Cardboard: Unbleached, unwaxed brown paper with ruffled inner liner. A recyclable material used to make cardboard boxes.

Curbside Recycling: Term used for scheduled recycling pick-up from households.

Decompose: To decay or rot.

Disposable: Designed to be thrown away after use.

E-Waste: Electronic equipment that is no longer useful or is obsolete, including computers, and TVs. Many components of e-waste can be recycled. [Click here if you have e-waste to recycle](#)

Ecology: The study of living things and their relationship to the environment.

Environment: Everything that surrounds and influences living organisms, including people, animals, plants, soil, water, weather, buildings, etc.

Environmental Impact: The effect a particular action or practice has on the environment and/or its components (land, air, water, or biota).

Extended Producer Responsibility (or Product Stewardship): Refers to placing the obligation of providing and/or paying for proper disposal of a product on the manufacturer or retailer, instead of on local government. Term is most often used when seeking solutions for electronics recycling/disposal.

Ferrous Metals (Fe): Magnetic metals which are composed mostly of iron.

Fossil Fuel: The remains of plant and animal life that are used to provide energy by combustion. Examples: coal, oil, natural gas.

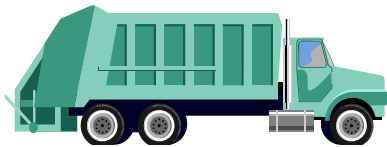
Garbage: Unwanted material that is thrown away.

Glass Containers: Glass bottles and jars used to package food, juice, and other edible items.

Greenhouse Gases: Gases in the atmosphere that trap the sun's energy causing a "greenhouse effect", which is the cause of climate change. Examples of greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and fluorocarbons.

Green Space: An area of grass, trees, or other vegetation set apart for recreation or beautification in an urban environment.

Green-Washing: Term used to describe advertising or labeling that misleads the public to think that products are more environmentally-friendly than they actually are.



Hauler: An individual or company that collects and hauls materials (recyclables, trash) from one place to another.

Hazardous Waste: Waste substances that cause special problems because they are poisonous, explosive, corrosive, radioactive, harbor disease-causing microorganisms, or are dangerous for any other reason.

Heavy Metals: Metals such as cadmium, lead, and mercury that are retained in the environment and are poisonous. Many batteries and fluorescent bulbs contain heavy metals and must be disposed of properly.

Incandescent: A light bulb that emits light from heat

Inorganic: Not composed of carbon.

Leachate: Liquid that has percolated through solid waste and/or has been generated by decomposition of solid waste. It contains dissolved, extracted, or suspended materials and may contaminate ground or surface water. It is especially a problem in areas of high rainfall and porous, sandy soil.

Litter: (1) noun: Carelessly discarded trash, often left in an open or public place.
(2) verb: The act of discarding trash carelessly, often in a public place.

Materials Recovery Facility (MRF): A location which separates recyclables by material so they can be recycled into new products.

Methane: A colorless, odorless gas that is produced by decomposition of organic material. It is commonly produced in a landfill by decomposing waste and can be collected and burned as fuel.

Mulch: An organic product produced by grinding up wood and yard waste left by residents and commercial businesses. Intended to be used as a soil addition to improve growing conditions, retain moisture, and supply minimal amounts of nutrients. Has less nutrient value than compost.

Municipal Solid Waste (MSW): Wastes generated by residents, businesses, and institutions.

Natural Resources: A material source of wealth found in nature such as timber, fresh water, wildlife, or a mineral deposit.

Non Ferrous Metals (NF): Non-magnetic metals that contain no iron, such as aluminum, copper, brass and bronze.



Nonrenewable: Natural materials which, for various reasons (rarity, time required to replace material, etc.) are finite and cannot be replaced.

Organic: Living or once living material, composed of carbon.

Packaging: The wrapping, container, or sealing of a commodity.

Paperboard: General term for heavyweight grades of paper that are used for containers, boxes, cartons and packaging materials, such as cereal boxes. Recyclable in Onondaga County.

Plastic: Man-made material made from molecules (polymers) containing hydrogen, carbon, and oxygen. It can be molded, extruded, or cast into various shapes and films or spun into filaments and made into material, such as carpet, clothing, etc.



Polyethylene terephthalate (PETE): Used mainly to manufacture plastic bottles. It is the most commonly recycled plastic. **PETE bottles ARE recyclable** in Onondaga County.



High-density polyethylene (HDPE): Used to produce milk jugs and other plastic products. **HDPE bottles ARE recyclable** in Onondaga County.



Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC): Used to make pipe. **Not recyclable** in Onondaga County.



Low-density polyethylene (LDPE): Used to make cellophane wrap, and plastic grocery bags. Not recyclable in your blue bins. You can return your plastic grocery bags to many stores for recycling.



Polypropylene (PP): A light, highly resistant plastic used in packaging, coating, pipes, and tubes. Margarine tubs, yogurt containers, etc. **These ARE recyclable** in Onondaga County.



Polystyrene (PS): Generally referred to as "Styrofoam"; used in food containers, egg cartons, and packaging. **Not recyclable** in Onondaga County.



Other: Indicates that the item is made from a plastic other than the six listed above, or is a combination of different types of plastic. **Not recyclable** in Onondaga County.

Pollution: The contamination of soil, water, or air. Improperly disposed waste can cause pollution.

Post-Consumer Waste: Discarded material from a residence or business after it has completed its useful life; such as old newspapers.

Pre-Consumer Waste: Discarded raw materials from a manufacturing or industrial process that are considered waste.

Precycle: Making choices prior to purchase to reduce the amount of waste generated from the purchase. For example, buying in bulk, buying recyclable products and packaging, etc.

Product Stewardship (or Extended Producer Responsibility): Refers to placing the obligation of providing and/or paying for proper disposal of a product on the manufacturer or retailer, instead of on local government. Term is most often used when seeking solutions for electronics recycling/disposal.

Pulp: Fibrous material used to make paper and paper board material.

Recyclable: A product made of materials that can be used as material for new products. What is recyclable varies from community to community. [Onondaga County rules can be found here.](#)



Recycle: The collection and reprocessing of manufactured materials for reuse either in the same form or as part of a different product.

Recycled Content: Amount of recycled material used to make a new product, usually expressed as a percentage (for example, 30% post-consumer recycled content).

Recycling Rate: A measurement to calculate how successful a recycling program is. One method is dividing **tons diverted** from the trash through recycling and composting by **total tons generated** (both waste and recycling combined). Onondaga County has great recycling rate: http://www.ocrra.org/documents/ANNRPT_2009_030510.pdf

Reduce: To lessen the amount of waste you generate.

Renewable Resource: A natural resource which can be renewed or regenerated by natural cycles or sound management practices, such as trees and water.

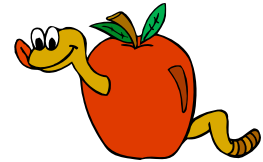
Reuse: To extend the life of an item by repairing, modifying, or creating new uses for it, generally in its original form.

Source Reduction: The reduction of the amount of waste generated that must eventually be discarded, including minimizing toxic substances in products, minimizing volumes of products, and extending products' useful lives. It requires manufacturers and consumers to take an active role in reducing the amount of waste that is produced.

Sustainability: Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Transfer Station: An intermediate collection facility that temporarily holds solid waste before transporting to a disposal facility. [Click here for information about OCRRA's two transfer stations](#)

Vermicomposting: The process of using worms and their by-products to produce partially decomposed organic material for use as a soil additive.



Waste: Materials determined to be of no value and thrown away.

Waste-to-Energy: A process where waste is heated at high temperatures to generate steam or electricity. [Click here to learn about OCRRA's Waste-to-Energy facility](#)

Waste Stream: Term for all materials being thrown away, including items which could be recycled or converted to energy through a Waste-to Energy process.

Windrowing: The placement and management of compostable material in piled rows, where micro-organisms break down organic material into a finished compost product.