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# Recycling and Its Importance: It's Time to Clean Up

## It's Time to Clean Up

What's the deal with recycling? It is such an important environmental issue, and yet it seems as though there isn't much done about it as a community. If you ask a random person on the street what they think about recycling, nine times out of ten they'll smirk and tell you "It's good for the environment." But, really, they don't understand the significance of recycling. Although the concept of recycling and reusing is preached in the schools, on the television set, and on billboards, people don't take it seriously enough. Recycling is plainly returning an item back to its original condition so that it can be reused. As astonishing as it may seem, the average San Diego citizen disposes of 4.6 pounds of waste per day, which would equate to more than a thousand six hundred pounds per year. Surprising, half of this outlandish total of waste dump could easily be recycled. Recycling is so important to the welfare of our community that California passed a law that required all of its counties and cities to cut the amount of waste going to their landfills in half. Most people already know that recycling helps conserve natural resources, and San Diegan's of course know that recycling saves space in our landfills. On the other hand, few know that recycling waste products conserves water, energy, trees, and helps reduce pollution in our drinking water and air.

With the recent budget deficits in California, energy must be conserved to save money. Conserving energy by way of recycling is a crucial environmental benefit. It takes far less energy to make new products and put them into working order using recycled waste than it does to make them from entirely new materials. Every pound of steel that you recycle will save enough energy to light a 60-watt bulb for more than a day! A recycled pound of plastic will keep the same bulb aglow for 48 hours straight. Even that empty Sprite bottle that you so thoughtlessly recycled will store more than enough energy to keep your television set running for hours on end. San Diego will benefit greatly from the extra energy they will save just by putting their recyclables in the big blue bin. For example, the citizens of Pennsylvania came together as a community and made a valiant effort at improving the amount of waste they recycle. They in turn saved Pennsylvania nearly 46 trillion BTUs of energy, enough to power 439,000 houses at one time. Recycling paper products saves our trees and water resources as well! Making a ton of paper from materials that were recycled protects 17 trees from harm and consumes 50% less water, or 7,000 gallons. If every San Diegan recycled their Sunday newspaper, we would save close to a trillion trees per year, just as a single community. Imagine if every American did the same. In our current day, there is enough paper that is neglectfully thrown away annually that could make a 12 foot wall from Brooklyn to the capital of California.

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Possibly a more important reason to recycle is because it will reduce pollution risks in our society. Perhaps the most obvious way it will be able to do this is by keeping waste out of landfills, which can introduce contaminants and other toxins into groundwater systems. Recycling also keeps materials out of incinerators, which can pollute the air and create severe ash residue. Furthermore, recycling lowers environmental damage caused by logging, mining, as well as other methods that facilitate the procreation of raw materials. Most importantly, recycling prevents the emissions of many greenhouse gasses and water pollutants.

Perhaps the most appealing reason to recycle is because of its ability to create a myriad of jobs, which can consequently improve San Diego's economy. Recycling creates eight times the amount of jobs incinerator and landfill companies generate. Reuse, recycling, and waste reduction offer direct development opportunities for communities.

In California, meeting the state's 50% recycling goal is expected to create about 45,000 recycling jobs, over 20,000 of which are slated to be in the manufacturing sector.

It's effortless to put your empty water bottle in the recycling bin. It's so very easy to put your Twix wrapper where it belongs—in the same bin. And, it's painless to put that empty cereal box in that blue container. But then, how come we so rarely do it? Ask yourself, why you don't recycle more often? Well, now that you know the benefits that come from recycling there are no excuses when it comes to keeping San Diego clean.

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