

Q & A: Single-Sort Recycling in Jay

1. What is single-sort recycling?

A single-sort recycling system – sometimes called single-stream – allows residents to place all their recyclable materials into just one container. That means your bottles, paper, glass, cardboard, metal, and plastic no longer have to be sorted or separated. It makes recycling more convenient and it takes up much less space in your home.

2. Does everything go in the same box or bag?

Everything that is recyclable goes in one bag - trash, however, still needs to be separated. But that means each household needs only two containers – one for trash and one for recyclables.

3. We always had to separate recyclable items before -- why is it OK to combine them now?

New technology has made it possible to develop equipment that can separate recyclable items for us.

All the recyclables start out together on one conveyor belt and then, as it moves along, special equipment picks out one type of material at a time and sends it along a different track. Separation is done by size, by gravity, by special scanner equipment, by magnets, and so on.

4. It sounds expensive!

The single-sort system cost **ecomaine** about \$3.7 million and is not something any one of our communities could have afforded to do alone. But because the equipment is part of a regional approach to dealing with our waste problems, we all benefit from it and it makes good financial sense.

The money for the single-sort system came from the fees each municipality pays to dispose of its non-recyclable trash and from the income generated by selling recycled materials after processing.

5. What other communities are involved? Where is the equipment located?

Jay is now one of more than 40 municipalities in Southern Maine that are connected to **ecomaine** through contracts (20) or ownership (21).

With the increased capacity of single-sort equipment, many more communities can now participate in **ecomaine** by signing contracts for recycling.

To make profit from a recycling operation, using full-cost accounting, requires a very heavy volume that individual municipalities in Maine would find impossible or extremely difficult to meet. That's one reason the **ecomaine** regional effort makes good sense – even for our biggest city, Portland; another is the avoided expense of each municipality owning recycling balers, front-end loaders and other equipment necessary for recycling. **ecomaine**'s regional volume enables it to get top dollar for its recycled materials.

The single-sort equipment – along with the rest of **ecomaine** - is located in Portland, just off Exit 46 of the Maine Turnpike.

6. This sounds like a lot of money to spend on equipment, just so we can keep our recyclables in one container.

If that were the only benefit, yes, it would be expensive and not worth the price. However, the real benefit comes from an increase in recycling. Because the single-sort system is so easy and convenient, national statistics show that more people begin to recycle - and that

those who already recycle will recycle even more items.

An increase in recycling is good for us in three important ways:

- A. It's the right thing to do for our environment and it helps conserve our natural resources.
- B. Every pound of recyclables we save from the trash bin is one less pound for which Jay has to pay a waste disposal fee.
- C. Recyclables that are collected and sent to **ecomaine** for processing are then sold to manufacturers; that money helps to keep our fees for waste disposal from increasing.

7. Are there any other financial benefits?

Yes. For example, towns with transfer stations can compact recyclables since they don't have to be separated. By compacting the material, a greater quantity can be squeezed into the same trailer before it's full and needs to be hauled to **ecomaine**. That means fewer trips per year and, since haulers charge per trip, less expense for the town.

For municipalities that have curbside pick-up for recyclables, compaction brings the same advantage of fewer trips, but it also saves employee time. Without a single-sort system, employees had to take the bins from the curb and sort them by hand into the truck's compartments. The job goes a lot faster when you can just dump the whole bin at once.

8. So, will trucks that provide curbside pick-up idle less at each stop?

That's right. Those trucks will save on fuel costs and will pollute less. Because of the new single-sort system, communities that range in size from Portland to Hollis have decided that curbside recycling service is now affordable.

9. What are some of the items we should pull out of the trash and put into the recycling box?

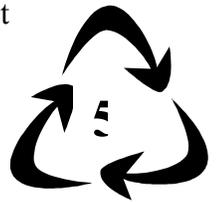
Paper makes up about 75% of all recyclable material sent to **ecomaine**. That's because a great deal of paper products can be recycled

now, including: cardboard – in fact, all boxes, newspapers, magazines and catalogs, and all books – including paperbacks, hardcover, and phone books. Other recyclable paper products include junk mail, window envelopes, file folders, wrapping paper, shopping bags, and aseptic milk and juice cartons (ones with gable tops and flat tops).

10. What else should we be looking for?

Plastic, metal and glass - including things like foil, cans, pots & pans, empty aerosol cans, empty bottles and jars of any color.

Plastic recycling has now changed to include anything labeled #1-7 inside the recycling triangle. The exception is Styrofoam; it cannot be recycled even though some of it carries the #6. Even many plastic grocery bags are now recyclable – just look for the recycling triangle on the side or the bottom of the bag.



11. It's always good to hear that the number of materials which are recyclable is expanding. But that brings up a good point: what should NOT be recycled?

That's a good question... and it's important to know the answer because recyclable material is sold according to the consistency in each bale. For example, if bubble-wrap – which is NOT recyclable - gets mixed into the a bale of #2 plastic, the price will go down or the buyer may send it back as unusable.

Here are some items that should NOT be included with your recyclables (for various reasons): light bulbs, hypodermic needles or any other sharp object, vinyl siding, bubble wrap, Styrofoam packaging or peanuts, toys, food bags, diapers, potato chip bags, or trash.

Some of these items can be included with your trash, but some are considered hazardous and must be disposed of in another way. To find out which items are hazardous and how to dispose of them, go to **ecomaine**'s website at www.ecomaine.org or call 207-773-1738.

12. What about food? We know it isn't recyclable, so what should we do with

garbage? Should it be treated as trash?

As a last resort, food can be included with trash. But keep in mind that leftover food items weigh a lot more than most other items in your trash and that the Town pays its fee based on weight. We ask everyone to seriously consider composting. It isn't difficult or expensive and it doesn't have to have an odor, either. **ecomaine** can give you information to help you get started.

Hazardous Waste

Items categorized as "hazardous waste" must be disposed of carefully and **cannot be included with your trash or with single-sort recycling**. However, area transfer stations and recycling centers often offer programs to take this kind of waste. For more information:

- Visit www.ecomaine.org
- Call ecomaine at 773-1738
- Call your *town office*

Examples of hazardous waste are:

- ✗ Ammunition
- ✗ Anti-freeze
- ✗ Button-cell batteries
- ✗ CFL light bulbs (compact fluorescent lights)
- ✗ Chemicals
- ✗ Computers and related parts
- ✗ Fertilizers
- ✗ Fluorescent bulbs (of any kind)
- ✗ Fuel
- ✗ Mercury (in any amount)
- ✗ Oxygen tanks
- ✗ Paint thinner
- ✗ Pesticides
- ✗ Propane tanks
- ✗ Rechargeable batteries
- ✗ TVs

THE JAY SINGLE-SORT GUIDE

DO RECYCLE

PAPER, PLASTIC, METAL, AND GLASS CAN ALL BE MIXED TOGETHER.

PAPER

- Newspapers & Inserts
- Magazines
- Mail & Catalogs
- Paper Bags
- Office Paper & Envelopes
- File Folders
- Wrapping Paper
- Phone Books
- Hard Cover Books
- Paper Plates
- Milk & Juice Cartons
- Drink Boxes & Aseptic Containers
- Cardboard Boxes
- Cereal Boxes
- Gift Boxes
- Pizza Boxes

PLASTIC

- Water Bottles
- Milk Jugs
- Detergent Bottles
- All containers marked with a #1-#7 (except Styrofoam)
- Plastic Grocery/ Shopping Bags marked with a #2 or #4

METAL

- Tin Cans
- Aerosol Cans (empty)
- Aluminum Cans/Foil
- Pots & Pans

GLASS

- All glass Bottles & Jars (all colors)

All containers should be empty.

DON'T RECYCLE



Batteries, alkaline
Bubble-wrap
Clothing & shoes
Diapers
Envelopes, Tyvek® or plastic
Food (but you can compost it)
Kitty litter
Knives
Light bulbs, incandescent (trash), compact fluorescent light bulbs (return to store)
Needles & sharps
Paper napkins
Paper towels
Plastic bags: frozen vegetable, snack/sandwich, trash bags
Plastic wrap or film
Potato chip bags
Ribbon & bows
Styrofoam® or polystyrene foam (even if marked #6)
Trash/waste
Vinyl (siding, bumper stickers, etc.)
Waxed boxes & paper

Also see "hazardous waste" information on back

For more information, go to www.ecomaine.org or call us at 773-1738.