

## RECYCLING CHEMICAL CONTAINERS

**Objective:** Use chemicals safely to reduce the negative impact on people.

**Concept:** Chemicals come in a variety of containers, many of which can be recycled if done properly.

**Targeted Age:** Middle school age

**Materials:** Internet / Phone / Library

Each community is different in their activities related to recycling hazardous material and containers. City/county officials, extension, and private companies collaborate to encourage farmers and the public to safely recycle pesticide containers and get rid of excess chemicals. Divide the group into two groups. One group will be finding ways to dispose of empty chemicals containers. Make a list of ten chemicals found on a farm (bagged lawn fertilizer, can of bug spray, crop insecticide, bagged seed corn, garden manure, etc.). Use the internet, phone, or library to find what empty containers can be placed in the recycling bins, trash, burnt, or must be taken to a special hazardous waste receptacle station. Use the following recycle list to identify each container category.



PETE

**Poly(ethylene terephthalate):** The easiest of plastics to recycle. Soda bottles, water bottles, vinegar bottles, and medicine containers. Is recycled into bottles and polyester fiber.



HDPE

**High-density Polyethylene:** Readily recyclable. Containers for: laundry/dish detergent, fabric softeners, bleach, milk, shampoo, conditioner, motor oil. Newer bullet proof vests, various toys.



V

**Poly(vinyl chloride):** Used extensively. Pipes, shower curtains, meat wraps, cooking oil bottles, baby bottle nipples, shrink wrap, clear medical tubing, vinyl dashboards and seat covers, coffee containers.



LDPE

**Low-density Polyethylene:** Wrapping films, grocery bags, sandwich bags. Can be recycled into more of the same.



PP

**Polypropylene:** Tupperware®, syrup bottles, yogurt tubs, diapers, outdoor carpet.



PS

**Polystyrene:** Coffee cups, disposable cutlery and cups (clear and colored), bakery shells, meat trays, "cheap" hubcaps, packing peanuts, styrofoam insulation. It's difficult to recycle since it is bulky and very lightweight. That makes transportation difficult.



OTHER

Can be a mixture of any of the other recycling types which make it difficult to recycle. Avoid this product if possible.

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## RECYCLING CHEMICAL CONTAINERS (CONTINUED)

The other group is assigned to identify how to dispose of unused chemicals. Identify ten chemicals that might be found on a farm (a half gallon of paint, a half sack of lawn fertilizer, half dozen heart worm pills, etc.). Use the internet, phone, or library to find where, how, and when these chemicals can be deposited. Ask about any special preparation that must be done before the chemicals will be accepted.

Each group will present their finding to the total group, comparing, and contrasting the information found.

Additional ideas:

- ▶ Create a community brochure or video about recycling chemical containers. Ask the local extension office for assistance in content accuracy and distribution.
- ▶ Take a field trip to the local landfill or recycling center to see first-hand how recyclables are transformed.
- ▶ Start a school project where students assist landscape and sport field maintenance staff in participating in pesticide container recycling. Or start a recycling program for your agricultural community, if you don't have one.

