

## What you need to know to “Start Smart, Recycle Right” in Hampton Roads Learn what’s recyclable in your community for America Recycles Day, Nov. 15

(Hampton Roads, Va., October, 27, 2023) – Knowing which items are acceptable for recycling and placing only these clean, dry objects in recycling containers can make local recycling efforts more productive, while reducing waste. That is one of the drivers behind the “Start Smart, Recycle Right” message that askHRgreen.org and TFC Recycling wish to convey for America Recycles Day, November 15—and every day.

**Start Smart  
Recycle  
Right**

“Starting smart begins when you shop, by choosing products according to their packaging,” said Katie Cullipher, a team leader with [askHRgreen.org](http://askHRgreen.org). “It can be as easy as buying eggs in a cardboard carton instead of a plastic or Styrofoam container, which are not recyclable. Or by avoiding single-use plastics such as plastic straws, cutlery and bags. Then, you recycle right by only placing items in your recycling container that your locality accepts.”

To help communities throughout the region understand what is and is not recyclable locally, askHRgreen.org publishes an online [Recycling & Disposal Lookup Tool](#). It lists by community what is recyclable at curbside and through drop-off programs, as well as what constitutes trash.

According to Cullipher, paper, plastic bottles with a neck or spout, and metal cans are accepted for recycling in most localities throughout Hampton Roads—if the items are empty, clean and dry.

“And please do not place recyclables in plastic bags before placing them in your container,” Cullipher added. “Plastic bags are not accepted in municipal residential recycling programs. Some well-intentioned people can actually do more harm than good by putting wrong items such as these in their recycling bin.”

Michael Benedetto, president and CEO of [TFC Recycling](#), knows all too well the harmful impacts of wishful recycling.

“Plastic bags and wraps get caught in machinery and have to be manually removed, causing delays in processing,” said Benedetto. “Items such as gas cans, lithium batteries and aerosol cans should never go in the trash or recycling bin because these are dangerous fire hazards. Residents should save those materials for household hazardous waste disposal.”

In addition to local recycling information, the online lookup tool provides disposal information for all types of materials. What askHRgreen.org leaders want residents to remember about recycling is: “When in doubt, throw it out.”

“For years, the idea was to recycle, recycle, recycle,” Cullipher said. “That sentiment contributed to where we are today. Start smart by knowing what items are accepted where you live. The goal is not to recycle everything, but to recycle right.”

To see what’s recyclable in your community, check the askHRgreen.org Recycling & Disposal Lookup Tool [at this link](#). And to learn more about “all things green” in Hampton Roads, visit [askHRgreen.org](#).

**#1 Start Smart** – It starts when you choose products according to their packaging. This includes:

- Products without packaging such as fresh fruits and vegetables, which can be placed in a reusable tote or mesh bag
- Products with packaging that can be recycled in your community including cardboard containers, paper, plastic jugs with a spout and metal cans
- Products that themselves can be recycled in your community when you’re done using them
- Or products that can be reused, such as jelly jars and paper bags

**#2 Recycle Right** – The next step is to know what your community accepts for recycling—and place only these items in the recycling bin. Paper, plastic bottles and metal cans are universally recyclable if these are empty, clean and dry.

- Recyclable paper products: printer paper, newspaper, magazines, flattened cardboard boxes, cardboard rolls
- Recyclable plastic products: empty plastic bottles and jugs with a neck or spout can be recycled, including beverage bottles, jugs, cleaning product bottles and jugs
- Empty metal cans that can be recycled: steel and tin cans, aluminum cans

**Visual assets available at [this link](#).**

**About askHRgreen.org** [askHRgreen.org](http://askHRgreen.org) is your go-to resource for all things green in Hampton Roads – from recycling tips and pointers for keeping local waterways clean to water-saving ideas and simple steps to make local living easy on the environment. Launched in 2011, the region-wide public awareness and education campaign is administered through the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission and powered by the following members: The cities of Chesapeake, Franklin, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach, and Williamsburg; the counties of Gloucester, Isle of Wight, James City, Southampton, Surry and York; the town of Smithfield; and HRSD. Like [askHRgreen.org](https://www.facebook.com/askHRgreen.org) on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/askHRgreen.org), follow on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/askHRgreen) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/askHRgreen), tune in to [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...) and catch the “Let’s Talk Green” [blog](#), written by a team of local experts.

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