



# Maximizing Recycling at the GFL MRF

Recycling continues to evolve, and with new technologies, facilities are becoming more efficient than ever. Since January 2, 2025, the City of Fort Wayne’s recyclables have been processed at the GFL Pontiac Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) in Pontiac, Michigan. This facility, which handles over 35 tons of single-stream recyclables per hour and has a processing capacity of around 140,000 tons per year, is designed to maximize material recovery and improve sorting efficiency.

At the heart of the facility’s operation is an advanced sorting system that accurately identifies and separates materials. Paper products, like newspapers, office paper, and cardboard, are sorted from metals, such as aluminum and tin cans. Plastics, including PET, HDPE, and rigid containers, are processed to ensure that only high-quality materials move forward for recycling. The facility now also accepts aseptic packaging, such as juice and milk cartons, further expanding the range of recyclable materials and diverting more waste from landfills.



Despite these technological advancements, contamination remains a significant challenge. Non-recyclable materials—such as plastic bags, food scraps, or improperly sorted plastics—can slow processing, damage equipment, and lower the quality of recovered materials. To address this, the Pontiac MRF utilizes advanced optical sorting technology that rapidly scans materials based on their composition and separates them with high accuracy. Manual quality control measures further refine the process, ensuring that only clean, valuable recyclables make it through.

Even with a facility of this caliber, the success of Fort Wayne’s recycling program depends on residents doing their part. Keeping materials free from contamination—rinsing out food containers, avoiding plastic bags, and following local recycling guidelines—helps ensure that recyclables can be efficiently processed and reused. Small steps at home contribute to the overall success of the system, reducing waste and making recycling more effective.

# Keep Fort Wayne Clean

Litter is more than an eyesore — it harms public health, wildlife, and our quality of life. Items like plastic bottles, fast-food wrappers, and cigarette butts litter roadsides, parks, and waterways. Wind, water, and traffic spread debris, clogging storm drains and endangering wildlife. The Keep America Beautiful 2020 National Litter Study found nearly 50 billion pieces of litter along U.S. roadways and waterways, with slightly more near waterways.

Join the Great American Cleanup on Saturday, May 3 to help restore Fort Wayne’s beauty. The City provides garbage bags, gloves, and T-shirts for volunteers. After cleanup efforts, participants are invited to Headwaters West from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. for a celebration with food, drinks, prizes, and live entertainment.

Individuals and groups can choose a location or request one from the City. Most cleanups begin at 8 a.m., but teams can pick a different time or day within the same week. Afterward, participants can submit their results to track the program’s success.

Let’s work together for a cleaner, healthier community. To sign up, call 427-1345 or email [greatamericancleanup@cityoffortwayne.org](mailto:greatamericancleanup@cityoffortwayne.org). Thank you for helping to Keep Fort Wayne Clean!



Credit: dragnan991 | iStock | Getty Images Plus

# Schedule Your Bulk Item Pickup

Furniture and appliances are among the most common items illegally dumped along roadways, in parks, and on vacant lots. There is no need to dump these items improperly. The City of Fort Wayne Solid Waste Department provides residents with a convenient pickup option for bulk items.

To take advantage of this service, you must schedule this service at least two business days prior to your regular garbage day. We will accept up to three bulky items per pickup appointment.

To schedule a bulk trash pickup, you may use the online service request form by clicking on “Contact 311” in the menu bar at [CityofFortWayne.org](http://CityofFortWayne.org). Simply choose “Solid Waste,” then the “Bulk Trash Pickup” option. If you prefer, you may call 311 to schedule this service.

These items are accepted during bulk trash pickups:

- Furniture
- Mattresses/bed springs (These items must be completely wrapped in plastic. Plastic mattress bags are available at hardware and home improvement stores, as well as online.)
- Non-refrigerant appliances, such as washers, dryers, stoves, and dishwashers

These items will not be accepted during a bulk trash pickup. Visit [ACwastewatcher.org](http://ACwastewatcher.org) for disposal options.

- NO tires, batteries, or concrete
- NO appliances that contain refrigerants (Freon), such as refrigerators, freezers, air conditioners, water coolers, and dehumidifiers
- NO remodeling debris

If possible, residents should place bulk items at least 3 feet away from their garbage cart so that the garbage truck arm doesn't get caught on bulk trash.



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## Know What to Recycle



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Recycling properly starts with knowing what can and cannot be recycled. Acceptable items include clean, dry paper products, such as cardboard, envelopes, junk mail, magazines, newspapers, office and school papers, paperback books, paper grocery bags, and wrapping paper without metal. Metal cans, glass bottles and jars, and plastic bottles and jugs are also recyclable.

Proper labeling of recycling bins inside your home is another key step. Clearly marked labels help remind everyone what belongs in the bin and what does not. Simple, visible labels can make a big difference and reduce confusion. To ensure recyclables are processed correctly, all bottles and other containers should be emptied of residue, rinsed out, and air-dried. Larger items like cardboard should be flattened to save space in the cart, and if needed, cut into smaller pieces no larger than 18 by 18 inches.

It is important to keep recyclables loose in the bin and never place them in plastic bags. Bagged recyclables can interfere with processing and sorting equipment, leading to inefficiencies in the recycling system. Hazardous materials, such as hoses, cords, batteries, chemicals, and medical sharps, should never be mixed with recyclables, as they can pose

risks to workers and damage equipment. Similarly, items that contaminate the recycling stream, such as dirty recyclables, greasy pizza boxes, and diapers, should be kept out to prevent issues at recycling facilities. For more recycling tips and details about proper disposal, visit [RecycleFortWayne.org](http://RecycleFortWayne.org).

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## Proper Cart Placement for Pickup

- Place your carts with the lid opening facing the street and the handle facing away. Carts should be set no more than 5 feet from the curb or alley and at least 3 feet apart from each other. Carts cannot be placed in the street for collection.
- Have your recycling and garbage carts set out by 6 a.m. on your collection day. Carts may be placed at the curb or alley no earlier than noon the day before collection.
- Position carts at least 3 feet apart from each other and from obstacles such as trees, posts, mailboxes, and vehicles. In areas with limited parking, leave at least 3 feet of space between carts and parked vehicles, and avoid parking in front of carts on collection day.
- Do not place carts under trees or other structures that may obstruct collection. Automated pickup requires up to 15 feet of overhead clearance.
- Keep carts clean by rinsing them out periodically with water. Be sure to empty all water from the bottom of the cart and allow it to dry before use.
- Once collection is complete, carts should be removed from the curb or alley as soon as possible after pickup.

# Keep Batteries Out of the Trash

Batteries are an essential part of daily life, powering everything from smartphones and laptops to remote controls and children's toys. These compact energy sources provide the convenience of portable power, keeping us connected and productive wherever we go. However, despite their usefulness, batteries can pose serious risks if not handled properly.

Lithium-ion batteries, in particular, can be hazardous when mismanaged. Overcharging, physical damage, and improper disposal can lead to serious issues, including fires in collection trucks and facilities, chemical leaks, and costly repairs. When a battery is overcharged or left plugged in overnight, it can overheat, increasing the risk of fires or explosions. Similarly, physical damage to a battery can cause it to leak harmful chemicals, posing risks to human health and the environment.

When it's time to dispose of batteries, take them to one of the Allen County Department of Environmental Management's partner stores, including Do It Best Hardwares and Batteries Plus. They can also be taken to the Household Hazardous Waste facility, located at 2260 Carroll Road, on Tox-Tuesday or Tox-Saturday. To find store addresses and more information, visit [ACwastewatcher.org](http://ACwastewatcher.org).



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## Household Hazardous Waste Could Be on Your Shelf

Many household products come with warning labels meant to signal potential danger, yet they often remain forgotten on shelves or in cabinets long after they are needed. In a typical home, families have about 100 pounds of unwanted hazardous chemicals stored. The unneeded — and often forgotten — items are called “Household Hazardous Waste” (HHW). Take a look around. You probably have HHW that you don't need, such as old paint, stain, lawn chemicals, bug spray, and similar items.

Gathering and safely disposing of HHW will open up storage space and also make your home safer for your family, as well as emergency responders in case of fire or natural disaster. Please don't pour HHW down the drain, pour it onto the ground, or put it into the trash. Instead, take advantage of our HHW program to safely dispose of it.

Here is a list of some of the most common HHW that your family may have sitting on shelves just waiting to be safely cleared away:

- Cooking oils
- Fertilizers
- Mercury devices
- Medications (no controlled substances)
- Paints
- Pesticides and herbicides
- Pool chemicals
- Household cleaners

The Household Hazardous Waste Program is operated by the Allen County Department of Environmental Management.



ALLEN COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
MANAGEMENT

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## Dispose of Electronics Safely

Electronics recycling helps reduce environmental harm by safely handling hazardous materials like lead, mercury, and cadmium. Improper disposal can contaminate soil and water, so recycling is essential. To manage electronics responsibly, start by extending their lifespan through proper care and repairs, reducing the demand for new products. When upgrading, donate or sell used devices to support reuse and minimize waste. For items beyond repair, drop them off at an electronics recycling location in Allen County. You can also bring your old electronics to the Electronics Recycling Event, hosted by the Allen County Department of Environmental Management, on Saturday, May 3, from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., at 2911 Meyer Road, Fort Wayne, IN 46806. Visit [ACwastewatcher.org](http://ACwastewatcher.org) for facility details and more information.





Credit: FG Trade Latin | E+ | Getty Images

# Celebrate Earth Day

As pollution increased in the mid-20th century, environmental preservation became a national concern. On April 22, 1970, U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson organized the first Earth Day, a national “teach-in” that engaged millions across the country. This movement raised awareness and led to actions that improved air and water quality while protecting land, wildlife, and communities.

Now, on April 22, 2025, we celebrate 55 years of Earth Day. Decades of education, conservation, and activism remind us that caring for the environment is just as important today. This day is a time to reflect on how our actions impact the planet and to appreciate the natural world that sustains us.

Celebrate by getting outdoors—hike, walk, run, or bike—and take in the beauty of spring. Observe the changes in nature, listen to the sounds around you, and breathe in the fresh air. Small actions, like reducing waste and conserving resources, contribute to a healthier planet.

Nelson once said, “Our very survival depends on whether or not we are able to preserve, protect, and defend our environment.”

To learn more about Earth Day and how you can make a difference, visit [EPA.gov/earthday](https://www.epa.gov/earthday) or [EarthDay.org](https://www.earthday.org).



## RECYCLING GUIDE

Discover the GFL Advantage

**ACCEPTED RECYCLABLE MATERIALS** | PLEASE FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES CAREFULLY

✓  Mixed Plastics (F3 - #7)	✓  Aluminum and Steel Cans	✓  Cardboard and Paper Boxes	✓  Newspapers and Inserts	
✓  Paperback Books and Phone Books	✓  Plastic Bottles and Jugs	✓  Glass Bottles and Jars	✓  Magazines, Brochures and Catalogs	

### RECYCLABLE MATERIALS NOT ACCEPTED

✗  Plastic Bags and Plastic Wrap	✗  Foam Packaging	✗  Food Waste	✗  Yard Waste	✗  Medical Waste
✗  Clothing and Shoes	✗  Construction and Demolition Waste	✗  Batteries	✗  Electronics	✗  Household Hazardous Waste

**NOTE:** This poster is a quick reference. Not everything is listed here.

### HOW TO PREPARE RECYCLABLES:

KEEP YOUR RECYCLABLES OUT OF PLASTIC BAGS. PLACE ITEMS LOOSE IN THE CART.

Green Today. Green For Life.

[gflenv.com](https://gflenv.com)



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***RecycleFortWayne.org***