

# DON'T TANGLE OR CONTAMINATE RECYCLE MORE FOR A GREENER STATE



## DEFENDING GLASS RECYCLING

Quick tips for defending glass recycling to elected officials, other governing bodies and the media.

### WHAT THEY MAY SAY:

"There are no end markets for glass."

### WHAT THE PUBLIC MAY HEAR

"My glass can't be recycled."



### THE FACTS: End markets for recycled glass exist and have existed for more than 100 years.

Recycled glass is processed into furnace-ready glass material called "cullet," which becomes new glass containers or fiberglass insulation. The use of cullet results in energy savings, reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and helps reduce the need for virgin materials. Demand for recycled glass exceeds current supply recovered from the recycling stream. Recycled glass is also used in other markets like highway reflective bead and commercial filtration media. More than 3 million tons of glass are recycled annually. Glass can be 100 percent recycled and recycled endlessly without product loss.

### WHAT THEY MAY SAY:

- "Glass has no value and belongs in the landfill."
- "The value of glass has gone down."

### WHAT THE PUBLIC MAY HEAR

"I wanted to recycle, but now I am not so sure. Maybe I should just throw my glass in the trash instead of the bin."



**THE FACTS:** Glass is valuable and does not belong in the landfill. Glass takes thousands of years to fully break down in a landfill. Glass has been one of the most stable commodities throughout the last five years. Glass value can be maximized with the proper process or equipment at material recovery facilities (MRFs). The amount of garbage in glass collected for recycling has increased, which hurts glass value. It is our responsibility to reduce waste in the landfill, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, care for our environment, protect public health, support industry, develop domestic markets and in-state jobs, and reclaim resources that would otherwise go to waste — **all of which can be realized by properly recycling glass.**

### WHAT THEY MAY SAY:

"Glass cannot be recycled since China isn't an option anymore."

### WHAT THE PUBLIC MAY HEAR

"Why were we shipping to China in the first place? That doesn't sound sustainable or environmentally responsible!"



**THE FACTS:** Glass has never been sent to China. Glass continues to be recycled 100 percent domestically in the United States. Recycling in America is complex and each region has its own set of challenges; however, the recycling story of glass has always been a great one. Glass supports manufacturing jobs, local economy and creates environmental benefits. North Carolina is home to a glass recycling processor and two glass bottling plants that use recycled cullet. Don't forget: in North Carolina, businesses with ABC permits are required to recycled glass beverage containers.

## WHAT THEY MAY SAY:

"Glass contaminates other recyclables."

## WHAT THE PUBLIC MAY HEAR

"We will never learn how to do this right!"



**THE FACTS:** With the proper equipment and sorting sequence at the MRF, glass and other materials can be separated effectively. Education helps reduce recycling contamination and can help when MRFs cannot make the necessary improvements to better process glass. Data shows that contamination can drop significantly with just an eight-week curbside outreach campaign. **Domestic markets + public education + single-stream recycling + enforcement = awesome results!**

## WHAT THEY MAY SAY:

- "Mixed colored glass cannot be accepted."
- "Glass must be washed and cleaned to be recycled."

## WHAT THE PUBLIC MAY HEAR

- "It doesn't matter where I put recycling because it will just end up in the trash."
- "This is IMPOSSIBLE to get right!"



**THE FACTS:** All colors of glass bottles and jars are accepted, even if they are broken. While it is preferred that glass be rinsed before placing in the bin, the recycling process accounts for food and other organics left in the glass. We recommend you remove any plastic lids, corks or aluminum caps, so the MRF can easily recover just glass. Labels are OK to leave on. Light bulbs, mirrors, candle glass, Pyrex or dishware are **NOT** recyclable through curbside collection. Contact a local processor to see if these items can be recycled directly or donate unbroken household glass to your local thrift store.

## WHAT THEY MAY SAY:

- "Recycling is broken."
- "Single-stream recycling doesn't work."

## WHAT THE PUBLIC MAY HEAR

"Recycling never worked to begin with and can't be fixed."



**THE FACTS:** **Recycling participation and tonnage skyrocketed when we switched to single-stream.** We may have had a cleaner stream before, but only a few dedicated citizens were recycling. Single-stream without education leads to contamination and wishful recycling. To recycle right, we have to educate and enforce.

## WHAT THEY MAY SAY:

"The cost of glass in the single-stream is just too expensive; we are cutting it from our program."

## WHAT THE PUBLIC MAY HEAR

"Glass isn't worth recycling and it should just go into the landfill."



**THE FACTS:** Citizens love to recycle glass. Communities that have removed it have suffered tremendous public relations consequences. Re-educating citizens to stop recycling glass after doing it for decades is almost impossible, as it was one of the first materials to be recycled, along with cans. Folks will continue to put glass in the single-stream even after you instruct them not to do it. And, don't forget: when glass is removed from single-stream recycling, it moves to the solid waste stream and you must still pay tipping fees to dispose of it. The cost does NOT go away and the public relations benefits to recycling glass are priceless. If you must remove it from your single-stream program, be sure to offer residents an alternative drop-off option.

