

Your Guide for Temperature-Controlled Packaging Disposal

Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) Coolers



Introduction to Packaging Disposal

Proper disposal of temperature-controlled packaging is essential for reducing environmental impact and meeting local waste regulations.

This guide explains how to identify and responsibly dispose of common packaging materials, including gel packs, phase change materials, water blankets, coolers, and insulation. Some materials can be recycled or composted, while others require specialized disposal.

Before discarding any packaging, always check for disposal instructions on the product. If none are provided, choose the most environmentally responsible option available.

The following sections explain how to identify each packaging type and dispose of it correctly.

Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) Coolers

Standard Styrofoam Coolers:

The typical cooler has limited options, so the best option is to reuse the cooler as much as possible, or switch to one of the biodegradable options offered by TempAid.

EarthWise Biodegradable EPS Coolers:

Most discarded plastics end up in landfills. Microorganisms found in these landfills are the key to the biodegradation of TempAid expandable polystyrene resin. Thanks to a unique additive, this revolutionary grade of EPS interacts and biodegrades with the resin's chemistry to break down the polystyrene at a molecular level, just like the anaerobic conditions found in biologically active landfills.

Regardless of the type of cooler, at the end of it's usable life, you are limited to 2 options:

1. EPS recycling facility: One of which is to dispose of the cooler through an EPS recycling facility that accept this type of plastic. These facilities can repurpose EPS into new products. These may be limited in some areas, but you can find nearby EPS recycling centers by using resources such as the EPS Industry Alliance's recycling map. here: <https://www.epsindustry.org/recycling-map>. In Canada, BC has a recycling depot for coolers. Refer to this website for more information: <https://recyclebc.ca/where-can-i-recycle/find-a-depot/>

2. Municipal Waste Services: If recycling or reuse is not an option, disposing of EPS coolers through local municipal waste services is another route. Flattening or cutting the cooler into sections may maximize space in your bins, but regardless of how you dispose of them, it's best to contact your local waste management service to confirm if they accept EPS, as it can vary by location.

Disposal Quick Reference

PRODUCT	DISPOSAL METHOD
Standard Gel-Packs	Thaw, squeeze gel into sink/toilet (if water-based) or garbage (if other), dry plastic film, recycle or dispose in garbage.
EarthWise Gel Packs	Thaw, squeeze gel into sink/toilet or can be emptied into a garden. Rinse plastic film and recycle it at a designated drop-off location.
Water Blankets	Thaw, cut open pockets, pour contents down the drain, recycle outer film if possible.
Hard Bottle PCMs	For recycling guidelines, refer to local resources or the "How2Recycle Store Drop-off" service.
PCM Mats and PCM Packs	Empty & rinse the plastic pouches, recycle if local guidelines permit, or dispose of them in standard trash
Standard Styrofoam Coolers	Reuse or recycle through EPS recycling channels, or dispose in garbage if recycling is not available.
Biodegradable EPS Coolers	Dispose in a landfill where microorganisms biodegrade it, or same as standard EPS (i.e., recycling or garbage).
Cellulose Insulation	Recycle curbside with no separation needed, or find local recycling centers through Earth911 or RecycleSearch.
Vacuum Insulated Panels (VIPs)	Dispose in regular trash if recycling is not available, follow local regulations.
SpeedyPac Mailer	Reuse if in good condition, contact local recycling for phase change materials, or dispose of PCM envelope in accordance with local plastic waste regulations.
Cardboard	Remove non-cardboard components, flatten, and recycle at designated locations. Avoid recycling wet or food-soiled cardboard.
SteadyPac Plastic Corrugate	Recyclable in some areas; check with local recycling programs or consider repurposing it, and if neither is feasible, flatten it and dispose in regular trash.
Packing Peanuts	Separate from other materials, check local drop-off sites, or compost if biodegradable. Contain in a single bag if disposing in trash.
Bubble Wrap	Drop off at designated recycling locations, contact local municipality for more information. Avoid placing in standard recycling bins.

What to Do If You Are Unsure What Packaging Can Be Recycled

If you are unsure what can be recycled in your area properly, check with your local waste management agency or municipality. They may have specific guidelines or disposal programs in place for these items.

As mentioned earlier, there are several websites with information on recycling locations, including:

For the US:

Below are several recommended resources in the US to check whether a package is recyclable in your area. Remember, your community's recycling website is often the best source for information specific to your local recycling program.

- How2Recycle Store Drop-off:
<https://how2recycle.info/about-the-how2recycle-label/store-dropoff-us-only>
- Plastic Film Recycling:
<https://how2recycle.info/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Store-Drop-off-Locations.pdf>
- TRP Chatbot: <https://recyclingpartnership.org/what-can-i-recycle/>
- Keep America Beautiful: <https://kab.org/recycling/> | [Earth911.com](https://earth911.com/) | bagandfilmrecycling.org | epsindustry.org/recycling-map | recyclenow.com/recycling-locator

For Canada

Recycling guidelines can differ by province, territory, and even local community. To find out if a package is recyclable in your area, your best resource is the recycling website or information provided by your community. Residents of the listed provinces should use their local resources to verify the recyclability of materials.

- British Columbia: <https://recyclebc.ca/what-can-i-recycle-2/>
- Saskatchewan: <https://sarcan.ca/how-to-sarcan/what-to-recycle/>
- New Brunswick:
https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/elg/environment/content/land_waste/content/recycling/recycle.html
- Alberta: <https://www.alberta.ca/recycling>
- Newfoundland and Labrador: <https://rethinkwastelnl.ca/>
- Manitoba: <https://www.recyclemanitoba.ca>
- Nova Scotia: <https://novascotia.ca/nse/waste/muncollection.asp>

Frequently Asked Questions

How does corrugated cardboard differ from paperboard?

While the term “cardboard” is commonly used for various boxes, it’s essential to note that shipping boxes are officially referred to as corrugated cardboard. The distinctive feature of corrugated cardboard is the additional layer of fiber that zig-zags between the brown sheets, providing increased tear resistance and enhanced durability for shipping purposes. On the other hand, paperboard is thinner and less robust, typically utilized for items like cereal boxes. Despite being colloquially labeled as cardboard, they represent distinct paper grades with varying commodity values.

What prevents the recycling of wet cardboard?

Despite incorporating water in the paper recycling process, getting paper wet and allowing it to dry alters the fibers, resulting in a stiffer feel. Additionally, paper mills are hesitant to pay for wet paper due to the added weight from the excess water.

Can I place packing peanuts in my curbside recycling bin?

Many cities do not include any type of expanded polystyrene (EPS) in their curbside recycling programs. However, it’s essential to verify this information locally. Even if your local program claims to accept #6 plastic (which technically includes EPS), foam plastics are often excluded.



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