Positive and Negative Effects of Recycling

Adapted from <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/positive-and-negative-effects-of-recycling.html> (8.2)

*Recycling involves remanufacturing used material into useful products.*

Recycling is the process of reclaiming waste materials for reuse. This helps conserve energy. It also saves natural resources. Plastic bottles, glass, and newspapers can be recycled to make useful items.

Here are some pros and cons of recycling.

**Positive Effects of Recycling**
*Preserves the Environment*
Recycling protects the environment. As the demand for paper increases, more trees are being cut. About 20% of all logs collected from our forests are used to make new paper. About 28,000 liters of water, 4000 kilowatt hours of electricity and 2 barrels of oil are used to make one ton of new paper. About 2200 pounds of solid waste is generated in making paper.

By recycling paper, we save resources and create less waste. Air pollution drops by 74% when paper is made from recycled material instead of with new wood pulp. Recycling can prevent the destruction of forests. Recycling a ton of mixed paper or newspaper saves 12 trees. We need trees. They help keep the air we breathe clean.

*Saves Energy*
Recycling aluminum and glass reduces our energy use. The energy to recycle aluminum cans is 95% less than the energy needed to make a new can. Recycling an aluminum can saves enough energy to power a TV set for 3 hours. The amount of energy saved by recycling a glass bottle will run a computer for 25 minutes.

*Reduces Pollution*

Plastic waste causes soil and water pollution. Plastic recycling is an effective solution to this problem. In recycling, the plastic waste is recovered and reused.

Recycling reduces greenhouse gas emissions. This reduces global warming. Recycling 35,116 tons of material is the same as taking 22,140 cars off the road. Recycling a ton of aluminum eliminates 12 tons of carbon dioxide emissions.
 *Lowers Carbon Footprint*
Processing raw materials uses a lot of energy. Energy is used to extract and transport raw materials. Transportation uses fuels like diesel and gasoline. These fuels are the main source of green gas emissions. Recycling means less fuel is used. When less fuel is used, less carbon dioxide is released into the environment.
 *Conserves Natural Resources*
Recycling saves our natural resources. Recycling a ton of steel saves about 2500 tons of iron ore. Making plastic uses up fossil fuels. About 17 million barrels of crude oil is used every year to make plastic in United States. By recycling plastics, several tons of fossil fuel are saved.

*Reduces Landfill Use*
The need for landfills will go down if recycling is increased. Landfills, where we dump our trash, are overflowing in many countries. People living near landfills can have health problems because of the pollution.

*Adds Jobs*
About 1.5 million new jobs will be created if we recycle 75% of our garbage. Now the U.S. recycles only 34% of its garbage.

**Negative Effects of Recycling**
Are there harmful effects of recycling?

*Water and Soil Pollution*

If recycling sites are not managed well, harmful chemicals in the trash can mix into water and soil. This can hurt plants and fish in the streams and lakes. When chemicals mix with rainwater, a poisonous mixture called leachate is formed. Leachate can be very dangerous if it reaches our water supplies.

*Cost*

Paper recycling can be expensive. Bleaching is required to make the paper reusable. Recycled paper is not always good quality. Plastic is difficult to recycle because there are so many different kinds of plastic. They have to be sorted carefully. You can’t combine different kinds of plastic.

*Health*

In bleaching recycled paper, harsh chemicals are used that can cause health problems to workers.

Last Updated: December 27, 2012