

See not waste, but opportunity on Global Recycling Day

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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It is estimated that in the year 2017 alone South Africans generated 54,2 million tonnes of general waste. Of these millions of tonnes of waste only 38,6% was recycled¹, which means almost two thirds of our waste still ends on landfill sites. It is up to consumers to put this landfill trend to bed by increasing recycling efforts in each household. This will help municipalities and waste companies repurpose recycling materials into the market for further economic benefit. Recyclables are now known as the 'seventh resource' joining the six other major natural resources in the world; this initiative has been recognised by Global Recycling Day.

"In celebration of Global Recycling Day on 18 March 2019, we would like to encourage consumers to see their waste as an opportunity and a resource. By using resources sparsely and knowing what can be recycled, we can all contribute to a cleaner and healthier environment," says Leon Grobbelaar, President of the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa (IWMSA). Global Recycling Day was created in 2018 to help recognise, and celebrate, the importance recycling plays in preserving our precious primary resources and securing the future of our planet.²

"Compared to European countries such as Germany which boasted with the world's highest recycling rate at 56% in 2018³, South Africa still has a long way to go in terms of increasing our country's recycling rates," says Grobbelaar.

"There are various waste streams and most of them are appropriate for recycling. Beyond saving raw materials, creating new glass, plastic, or paper from recycled products uses significantly less energy than those made from virgin materials. Recycling also helps us move towards a circular economy where very little waste is generated," Grobbelaar adds.

Here are the most common waste streams and recyclables and the best course of action to keep it out of landfill sites:

1. Cans

Nearly all cans and tins can be recycled, and it is estimated that 75% of the nearly one billion tonnes of aluminium ever produced has been recycled and is still in use⁴. "These include: food cans, aluminium cans, paint tins, steel beverage cans, oil cans and aerosol cans. Just make sure that it is clean and remember if not recycled these materials can take up to 200 years to degrade," says Grobbelaar.

2. Electronic waste (E-waste)

E-waste is anything that has processed or supplied electricity and is now out of use, and includes computers, phones, household appliances and light bulbs, to name a few. The e-Waste Association of South Africa (eWasa) estimates that each individual in South Africa generates about 6,2kg of e-waste annually.⁵ "E-waste contains hazardous materials such as mercury and should not be disposed of at landfill. A lot of supermarkets collect e-waste for recycling, such as old bulbs and batteries," mentions Grobbelaar. "E-Waste can also be sent back to the supplier where it was originally bought," he adds. The African continent generates a total of 1,9 million tonnes of e-waste of which only 12% is recycled with the balance going to landfills or being exported.⁶

3. Glass

"Most glass containers can be recycled, no matter the colour. Glass bottles do not need to be separated by colour, however it is advisable that the lids are removed," advises Grobbelaar. Glass and breakware items that cannot be recycled include: computer and television screens, light bulbs, car head lights, laboratory glass, windscreens, window glass, crystal and opaque drinking glass, mirrors, heat-resistant ovenware, ceramics and clay pots. Glass is currently one of the highest recycled materials in South Africa with a recycling rate of 78,4%.¹

4. Paper

Paper is another widely accepted waste stream for recycling and includes: newspapers, magazines, office paper, cardboard boxes and pamphlets. "According to the DEA's South Africa State of Waste Report (SoWR) 58% of paper is recycled, a figure which can definitely improve if we start thinking of paper waste as treasure rather than trash," says Grobbelaar.

5. Plastic

Less than half (43,7%) of the plastic waste generated in South Africa is recycled⁷, which is shocking considering that that a simple water bottle you purchase at the supermarket can take from 70 to 450 years to decompose. Grobbelaar advises that bottle caps and lids are removed from plastic packaging. "The recyclability of this waste stream depends on the equipment of recyclers and what the lid is made of."

"Recycling is certainly something the whole family can participate in, and by teaching children how to recycle from a young age we are fostering a love for and responsibility toward a clean and healthy environment for future generations. Your household recycling system can be as simple as separating wet and organic waste (food and garden waste); plastics and glass; and paper into three separate bags or containers," concludes Grobbelaar.

For more information about Global Recycling Day, visit the website [here](#).

For more information on the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa visit www.iwmsa.co.za. You can also follow IWMSA on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/iwmsa>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/IWMSA>).