

Glossary

Aluminum: A strong, light, silver-colored metal made mostly from bauxite ore.

Ashfill: A specially constructed landfill to be used only for disposing of ash from waste-to-energy plants.

Asphalt: A dark, tar-like material made from petroleum and gravel that is used to pave roadways.

Bacteria: Singled-celled living organisms that can cause disease; they also can break down solid waste.

Bauxite: A mineral. Most of the aluminum in the world can be found in bauxite.

Biodegradable: Material that is able to be broken down by microorganisms; includes most organic wastes.

BTU: British Thermal Unit. A measurement of the amount of heat needed to raise the temperature of one pound of water by one degree Fahrenheit.

Carbon Dioxide: (CO_2) A colorless, odorless, noncombustible gas made of carbon and oxygen molecules, which animals exhale when they breathe. Plants use this chemical in photosynthesis.

Cell: The area in a landfill where several layers of solid waste are deposited each day. At the end of the day, the layers are covered with soil and a cell is formed. Cells are built side by side and on top of one another until the landfill is completely filled.

Combustible: Capable of starting on fire.

Commercial Solid Waste: The waste from businesses.

Compost: Decayed, organic waste that changes into humus and can be used for fertilizer. Composting is the process of collecting and producing compost.

Contaminate: To make impure or not clean.

Cullet: Scrap glass that has been broken into tiny pieces.

Curbside Recycling Program: The process of separating recyclables to be picked up by a recycling truck at our homes. Many cities and communities now have curbside recycling programs.

Cycle: A continuous process.

Decay: The breakdown of materials, chiefly by bacteria.

Decompose: To break down, change form.

Degradable: Capable of decomposing.

Environment: The elements around us, like the air we breathe and the water we drink that influences our health.

Environmental Cycle: A regularly recurring chain of natural events that happens all around us every day. For example, a tree grows up and drops seeds that become new trees.

Environmental Protection Agency: (EPA) The federal government office in charge of making sure that our environment is safe to live in.

Environmentally Sound: A product, practice or thing that does not harm or disturb the environment.

Feldspar: A mineral found in many different rocks. It is one of the many materials used to make glass.

Fiberglass: Small pieces of glass that are made into yarn. The yarn is woven into a fabric that is used in insulation and molded as a plastic.

Garbage: Wastes, like food, that are likely to decompose.

Glass: A transparent, inorganic material produced by melting almost pure silica sand with burnt lime or limestone and soda ash, which gives hardness and chemical durability.

Glassphalt: A paving material that is very similar to asphalt. It is made of petroleum and cullet, rather than petroleum and gravel.

Grades: (Not the ones in school) A term used to label different quality-types of the same material. For example, newspaper is a different grade of paper than stationary paper. Each grade is recycled separately.

Groundwater: Water in the earth that supplies wells and springs. In many places, wells and springs are used for drinking water.

Hazardous Waste: Waste that can harm the environment because of its chemical makeup.

Household Hazardous Wastes: Wastes found around the house that can harm people or the environment because of their chemical makeup. Examples of household hazardous wastes include paint and paint cans, chemicals, medicines and inorganic cleaning supplies. Because of their hazardous nature, they should be stored properly and disposed of separately from the rest of household trash.

Humus: A rich, natural, soil-like fertilizer that is the result of composting.

Hydrogen Sulfide: (H_2S) A flammable, poisonous gas made of hydrogen and sulphur molecules, which smells like rotten eggs.

Impermeable: Not capable of allowing a liquid to spread or flow through. Something that is impermeable will not absorb water, for example.

Incineration: The process of burning something to ashes. This process can greatly reduce the volume of waste to be landfilled.

Incinerator: A building where garbage and other waste materials are burned to create a smaller amount of solid waste in the form of ash.

Industrial: Having to do with industries,

Industrial Solid Waste: The waste from industries.

Inorganic: Things that are not made from plants and animals, and do not contain the element carbon. For example, chlorine used in pools and ammonia cleaners. (see organic)

Leachate: Liquid, including rainwater, that has passed through or comes from solid waste. This liquid collects at the bottom of a landfill. In sanitary landfills, leachate is collected and cleaned, usually by sending it through the local sewage treatment plant, then it is returned to lakes and streams and so on.

Lime: This powdery material is used to help keep the various ingredients used in papermaking together. It is not to be confused with the green citrus fruit.

Limestone: A rock made from many different minerals. It is used to make glass.

Methane: A highly combustible gas with no smell or color. Methane is produced by solid waste as it decomposes.

Microorganism: Microscopic living things involved in the composting of wastes and in sewage treatment processes.

Mineral: An inorganic substance found in nature. Gold, silver and iron ore are minerals.

Mining Waste: The leftovers from the mining of various minerals. These leftovers usually have no use.

Mobius: When used in association with the BFI MOBIUS Curriculum, the term refers to the mascot.

Mobius, Augustus F.: A German mathematician who lived from 1790-1868. He invented the idea of a continuous strip, or loop, with a single twist in it. The recycling industry uses Mr. Mobius' strip as the familiar recycling arrows.

Monofill: Another term for ashfill.

Municipal Solid Waste: Solid waste produced in homes.

Open Dump: An open disposal site. In the United States, open dumps are being phased out by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Ore: Mineral or combination of minerals from which metals or other valuable substances can be mined.

Organic: Made from living organisms such as plants and animals. Organic substances include tree leaves, wool from sheep and any other materials containing the nonmetallic element carbon (like diamonds and graphite, which are pure carbon in different forms).

Petroleum Coke: A product made from coal that is used to build fires in furnaces and for making aluminum and steel.

Photosynthesis: The process by which green plants convert sunlight and minerals contained in the soil into oxygen that we breathe.

Pitch: A thick, dark, sticky substance found in coal, wood and petroleum. It is used to line the pots in which aluminum is made and to conduct electricity.

Pollution: The contamination of soil, water and/or air from the discharge of waste, gases or chemicals.

Precipitation: A weather term meaning the deposit or fall of rain, sleet or snow.

Purification: To make something clean and pure.

Recyclables: Almost all natural and some man-made materials, most commonly glass, aluminum, newspaper, cardboard, tin, plastic and oil.

Recycle: To make new products out of used materials like beverage containers, newspapers and glass.

Recyclery: A BFI recycling center where recycled things are sorted by what they are made of and packaged for shipping. For example, clear glass goes in one area while green glass goes in another.

Red Mud: The materials that remains after aluminum has been removed from bauxite ore.

Reduce: To cut down on the amount of the trash we produce.

Resin: A natural, organic substance used to manufacture varnish, ink and plastic.

Resource Recovery: A term used to describe what happens when the heat created from burning garbage is used to generate electricity.

Reuse: To use a product again, either for what it was originally made for or for something else. For example, a returnable beverage bottle may be returned and refilled with the soft drink (used for its intended purpose), or it could be used for a flower vase.

Salt Cake: A white, powdery material used to make pulp.

Sanitary Landfill: The modern, engineered way to deposit waste into the ground and still protect the environment by adding liners, compacting and covering the waste every day with soil, testing ground water, and keeping out hazardous waste.

Sewage: Liquid or solid waste which is carried off by sewers and purified in a sewage treatment plant.

Slurry: A thin mixture of water and fine substances such as clay. In a landfill, a slurry wall prevents the movement of slurry beyond the landfill boundaries.

Soda Ash: A white material made from the mineral called sodium. Soda ash is used to make glass.

Soil: The upper layer of earth which may be dug.

Solid Waste: Trash and garbage.

Solid Waste Management: The ways we get rid of our garbage, including putting it in a landfill, burning it and recycling it. Companies like Browning-Ferris Industries (BFI) are in the solid waste management business.

Solid Waste Stream or Waste Stream: The cycle that solid waste goes through, from the creation of garbage and trash, to depositing waste in landfills and incinerators. The waste stream includes the recycling process.

Source Separation: To separate recyclables and nonrecyclables at the place where the trash is created. A curbside recycling program is an example of source separation.

Sump: The lowest area of a landfill into which leachate drains before being pumped out and treated at the landfill or at a sewage treatment plant.

Tipping Fee: The price individuals, communities and trash hauling companies must pay a sanitary landfill operation to get rid of their trash or the trash they collect. The fee is called a tipping fee because truck drivers must unload by tipping up the back of the truck.

Topsoil: The top layer of soil containing valuable nutrients.

Trash: Material to be thrown away. Solid Waste

Vegetation: Plants, trees, shrubs, grass and the like.

Waste Stream: See solid waste stream.

Waste-to-Energy Plant: A process where energy, in the form of steam or electricity, is produced by burning solid waste, gases or chemicals.

Wood Fiber: A stringy substance made from wood. This substance makes paper feel the way it does (this is called texture). It also helps keep together the ingredients that make paper.

Wood Pulp: When wood fibers are combined, they are called pulp. The pulp is used to make paper and paperboard.

Yard Waste: Leaves, grass clippings and other organic materials collected from lawns. Yard waste is used for compost materials.