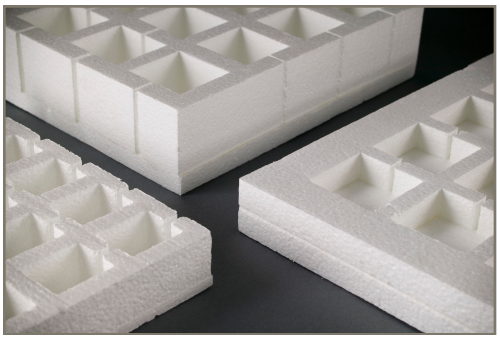
Foam PS Drop-off Recycling



Spotlight: Foam Pack Industries

RECYCLING FOAM PS WORKS

—Foam Pack Industries, family owned and operated for three generations, has been recycling polystyrene (foam PS) since 1971. Back then, recycling meant using ground foam PS as stuffing for bean bag chairs and stuffed animals (the kind you win at carnivals). Now Foam Pack's recycling program is a successful example of a manufacturer that uses foam PS, recycling their own scrap as well as accepting it from local businesses, community collection programs and the general public, then efficiently preparing the foam PS for delivery back into the manufacturing stream.

The clean food service and protective packaging foam PS dropped-off or delivered to Foam Pack is densified and shipped, in truckload quantities, to companies that make it into new products such as picture frames, decking, and patio furniture.—

To watch foam PS being recycled into new products, check out this video with Todd Sutton, also known as the Waste Sleuth, where he investigates foam polystyrene recycling.

< https://vimeo.com/160473626 >

Drop-off Foam PS Recycling Best Practices

Like all recyclables, drop-off sites want to collect clean foam PS. Ask residents to wipe or rinse free of food, liquids, dirt, etc. prior to recycling.

Steps for a successful drop-off recycling operation:

- Sites should have clear and easy to understand signage to reduce contamination and increase the value of the recyclables collected.
- Building material foam and packing peanuts are generally not included in drop-off collection programs. Reuse drop-off locations for peanuts are found online at www.LooseFillPackaging.com.
- Staffed facilities are best. Having on-duty personnel can reduce contamination and help educate participants. Staffing can improve multi-material program economics beyond the cost of personnel.
- Loose foam can be transported up to 50 miles, longer if backhauled. If there are no local recyclers of loose foam PS, then the best option is densification, which increases the value of the material and greatly improves the economics of shipping.
- Allocate sufficient storage space for collected foam PS to ensure the ability to generate full trailer loads.
- Cover collected material to keep clean, dry, and prevent photo-degradation. If your buyer can accept it, consider asking residents to bag their material to prevent it from being wind-blown.

"Actually it's simple, but most folks over complicate it. People bring the stuff in, we densify it, we ship it out to be recycled into new products. Everybody is getting it; they buy a product and inside the package is foam PS. We just want to see the stuff get recycled. Everybody needs to know it's 100% recyclable."

—Mitch Goodstein, co-owner, Foam Pack Industries, Springfield, NJ

HOW THEY DO IT

—Foam Pack Industries, a manufacturer and custom fabricator of expanded polystyrene products, knows how to get foam PS recycled. Using several collection and delivery options, they bring in hundreds of tons of clean block and food service foam PS annually.

Foam PS can be dropped off, mailed, or shipped to their manufacturing facility. They receive an average of 10–20 boxes daily. They also use a 24-foot box truck to pick up from select commercial locations within a five-mile radius. Numerous municipalities, within the Tri-state region, are delivering loads from community drop-off sites and collection programs. When added up, they are handling between 40–50 thousand pounds of foam PS per month.

Once the foam PS is on-site the material is pulverized by a grinder into baseball-sized chunks. Because much of the material is large blocks, Foam Pack Industries modified their grinder to increase the size of the receiving hopper so they can grind large material more quickly and efficiently.

The ground PS is then transferred by blown air via a 12 inch tube to a large hopper that feeds a horizontal, cold-compression continuous-feed densifier that compresses the foam PS into rectangular logs. The densified PS logs are stacked on pallets to eight feet high, weighing an average 2,000 pounds per pallet load. Finally, the pallets are loaded onto a trailer or container in a single stack of twenty pallets per load, making the target weight of 40,000 pounds. From there the densified PS blocks are delivered to end-users to be made into new products.—

FOAM PS RECYCLING RESOURCES:

- **www.PlasticFoodserviceFacts.com**
  Facts, news, public policy issues and recycling resources on foam PS foodservice products.
  American Chemistry Council, Plastic Foodservice Packaging Group
- **www.RecycleFoam.org**
  Information on foam PS recycling process, equipment and system manufacturers.
  Foodservice Packaging Institute, Foam Recycling Coalition
- **www.HomeForFoam.com**
  Information for government, homes, businesses, and schools on how and where to recycle foam PS.
  DART Container Corp.
- **www.EPSpackaging.org**
  Recycling tools and resources for original equipment manufacturers. Offers a foam PS Sustainability Toolkit.
  EPS Industry Alliance Packaging
- **www.EPSrecycling.org**
  Thirty-one countries connected via Global Recycling Access network.
  International EPS Alliance: Asia, Europe, and North America
- **www.FoamFacts.com**
  Foam PS recycling facts, links to articles and videos.
  DART Container Corp.
- **www.Plastics.Ca**
  Canadian focused information, articles, news, program highlights, markets, videos.
  Canadian Plastics Industry Assoc.
- **www.PlasticsRecycling.org**
  Recycling information, webinars and videos.
  Association of Postconsumer Plastic Recyclers