What does Waste Management do with trash, anyway?
We **collect** it from nearly 20 million residential, business, industrial and commercial customers.

We burn it to **generate green energy**.

We **recycle** paper, plastics, glass, and metals for a variety of new uses.

We **dispose** of it safely.

We use gas from the decomposition of trash in landfills as a **renewable energy source**.

Here’s the inside story.
Follow the Waste Stream

The “waste stream” describes the entire life cycle of the garbage we produce—from putting out the trash and recycling for pickup to disposal, energy production and the reuse of recycled materials. Let’s follow the journey...

Recycling Facilities

- Materials you recycle go this way...
  - Metals: Steel attracted to a magnet is removed. Magents are used to separate the steel from the rest of the recycling stream. Steel can be recycled many times.
  - Plastics: Mixed plastic containers are sorted by type and color. Air is blown into the mix to separate heavier and lighter plastics. In some facilities, plastic containers are optically scanned for separation into types, such as PET, HSPE, etc.
  - Paper: Paper recyclables are separated and baled. Paper is a valuable material that is used for a variety of purposes.
  - Glass: Cullet is mixed with sand, soda ash, feldspar and limestone at a glass plant. For use in making new glass containers, the cleaned cullet is used to make new bottles, jars and other glass products.

Waste-to-Energy Facilities

- Trash brought to waste-to-energy plants is inspected to make sure it only contains recyclables and other safe materials. Trash may be put into burning furnaces and compacted. The landfill's liner protects the surrounding land, air and water and gas and leachate extraction systems.
- The Glass-Gas-to-Energy facility is connected by a common control system. The gas is piped to an electricity generating plant, on- or off-site, where it is used as fuel to turn engines or turbines to generate electricity.

Landfills

- A landfill is an engineered area designed to safely contain trash, avoiding contamination of the surrounding land, air, and water. Landfills are monitored in a state-of-the-art central control room, where emissions are monitored in a state-of-the-art central control room.
- Landfill gas may be piped to an electricity producing facility. The gas is piped to an electricity generating plant, on- or off-site, where it is used as fuel to turn engines or turbines to generate electricity.

Closing the Loop

Green energy is delivered via electricity transmission lines to a utility where it is transferred to the local grid. Recycled materials are purchased by manufacturers who use them to produce, engineer, or reprocess their goods. Consumers buy the products from a wide variety of retail stores. They use the products, and sooner or later, the cycle begins all over again.

Responsible Disposal

Consumers can responsibly dispose of items like compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs), batteries, and electronics by using our convenient Think From Home® recycling kits.

Think Green From Home®

- Consumers can responsibly dispose of items like compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs), batteries, and electronics by using our convenient Think From Home® recycling kits.
- Materials that can be recycled are sorted and baled for reprocessing.
- Recycled and other safe materials are compacted.
- The materials are inspected for safe disposal.
- The materials go to a waste-to-energy facility for energy production, or a landfill for permanent disposal.
- Materials are recycled and used to make new products.
- The products are sold to consumers.
- The products are purchased and used by consumers, returning the material to the waste stream for recycling.

Energy

- Recycled materials are purchased by manufacturers, who use them to make new products. Some manufacturers use recycled materials to produce new products, while others use recycled materials to make alternative fuel sources.
- Landfill gas may be piped to an electricity generating facility, where it is used as fuel to turn engines or turbines to generate electricity.
- The electricity is delivered via utility transmission lines to a utility where it is transferred to the local grid.

Paper

- Paper is made from wood chips or fibers extracted from wood, paper, or other plant material. Paper is a valuable material that is used for a variety of purposes.
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Glass

- Glass is made from cored or melted sand, soda ash, feldspar, and limestone at a glass plant. For use in making new glass containers, the cleaned cullet is used to make new bottles, jars and other glass products.
- The Glass-Gas-to-Energy facility is connected by a common control system. The gas is piped to an electricity generating plant, on- or off-site, where it is used as fuel to turn engines or turbines to generate electricity.

Plastics

- Plastics are made from a variety of materials, including petroleum, natural gas, and other hydrocarbons. Plastics are optically scanned for separation into types, such as PET, HSPE, etc.
- Mixed plastic containers are sorted by type and color. Air is blown into the mix to separate heavier and lighter plastics.
- Some mills are able to use 100% recycled paper, while in others, recycled paper is separated from the long fibers.
- Paper recyclables are separated and baled. Paper is a valuable material that is used for a variety of purposes.

Metal

- Metals are separated from the rest of the recycling stream. Steel attracted to a magnet is removed. Magnets are used to separate the steel from the rest of the recycling stream. Steel can be recycled many times.
- Recycled glass is sold to the local utility. To produce electricity, which is routed to a turbine generator and used to power homes and heat buildings. Emissions from the use of extremely high-temperature control systems.

Water

- Water is used in the production of many materials, including paper, glass, and metals. Water is also used to cool down the equipment and to transport materials.

Air

- Air pollution control systems are fully implemented. The methane gas is recovered and burned to produce electricity, which is routed to a turbine generator and used to power homes and heat buildings. Emissions from the use of extremely high-temperature control systems.

Soil

- Soil is protected by managing natural by-products. Bacteria digest this organic material, which is then returned to the soil as natural by-products.

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