

Textile Recovery & Recycling

Frequently Asked Questions

As the leading provider of environmental solutions in North America, WM is actively collaborating with responsible agents across the recycling ecosystem in an effort to divert more materials from landfills. To advance textile recycling in Albany, WM, Goodwill SF Bay, and the City of Albany are working together on textile recovery as part of the city's residential collection service. The program focuses on the circular economy in textiles, by diverting textiles from the waste stream and giving them a second life or new life, whether as reused garments, raw material replacements for new clothing, or fibrous fillers for commercial applications.

1. How Does the Textile Recovery Program Work?

WM will collect clean and dry textiles (see acceptable textile items below) curbside from Albany residents. Items should be placed in bags no larger than 35 gallons and set out on designated dates. Be sure to attach the distributed postcard or label the bags clearly as "WM textiles." Bagged textiles should be placed by the curb next to the blue recycle cart or near the recycling container (for multi-family residents). Bags with textiles should not block truck access and should not be on top of the container. Bagged textiles may be collected on the designated date as late as 6 pm. Once collected, Goodwill SF Bay will sort through textiles, setting aside any items suitable for reuse and recirculation. Remaining materials that are not suitable for reuse—including worn, torn, ripped, or stained textiles—will be sent to WM's Textile Recovery Facility (TRF) for further processing and sorting.

2. What will Goodwill do with the material?

Goodwill SF Bay will use their expertise in sorting and grading recovered textiles to determine their eligibility for reuse. The items eligible for reuse will be available through Goodwill SF Bay retail stores, shopgoodwill.com, and the Goodwill clearance center to give the materials their best chance at a second life.

3. How Does WM's Textile Facility Work?

WM's textile facility is the first of its kind in the U.S. textile recycling space. It sorts materials by fabric type and color using advanced robotic near-infrared (NIR) technology. This innovative system identifies and separates textiles based on their composition, helping determine the best way to recycle or repurpose them for new uses.

4. Will textiles be landfilled?

The primary goal of the textile recovery program is to keep textiles out of landfills and promote sustainable reuse. Accepted textiles may be recirculated for reuse, processed into fiber for new garments, or downcycled into other commercial products. Contaminated, wet, or non-accepted textile items are not suitable for recovery.

5. Will textiles be exported?

WM works with responsible end-users in an effort to keep recovered textiles within domestic markets first and foremost.

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6. What items are accepted through this program?

Accepted Textile Items Include:

- Clothing, socks, fabric, fabric curtains, towels, linens, bedding, pillows, scarves
- Everything from new/gently-used to well-used, ripped and stained textiles

Unaccepted Items Include:

- Shoes, backpacks, or accessories (hats, gloves, belts, etc.)
- Mattresses, rugs, garbage, yard or food waste, recyclables, or electronics
- Items that are wet, items with chemicals, mold or other hazardous materials

7. What is downcycling and why does it matter for textile recovery?

While downcycled products may not retain the original textile's value, downcycling still plays an important role in waste reduction. It extends the life of materials that might otherwise end up in landfills, conserves resources that would have otherwise been used in these products, and supports a more sustainable approach to material use.

8. What materials will not be accepted and will be considered contamination?

Wet or heavily soiled textiles, household garbage, and non-accepted items—such as mattresses, pillows, hats, gloves, belts, and shoes—are considered contaminants in this program and should not be included in textile recovery collections.
