

MRF!!! What's a MRF? What's that stand for?

Well, five Victoria Falls residents found out on June 25. The Material Recycling Facility is where all of the Prince Georges County recycling material is sorted into the various components we throw into our single stream recycling bins. The sorted material, in large bales, is repurposed as it is sent out to various manufacturers who reuse the material.

The sorting process is pretty sophisticated yet also relies on a lot of human intervention as the material we throw out comes in the front door and then out the back as bales and trash.

The first stop is the dumping floor which is exactly that. Our recycling trucks back in and dump the whole load onto the floor. A large front end loader scoops it up and through a long series of conveyor belts the material begins its journey to the back end of the MRF.

Cardboard is sorted out, simple paper goes another route, metal containers go through a magnetic field to their own route, plastic containers are divvied up via an optical sorter, glass ends up being crushed. The glass material ends up going to the Prince Georges landfill as part of the process of daily layering of trash to maintain a relatively sanitary landfill. It is part of the process to properly maintain all this trash from blowing away and minimizing erosion.

Sorted material is baled by large machines. Each unique bale is identified as to the type of recycled material which tends to portend the value of that particular item. The bales can be classified as: polypropylene, hdpe color, hdpe clear, PET, aluminum, tin and steel, mixed paper, rigid plastic.

Of course what cannot be sorted and recycled ends up in the trash.

Some things learned by the group. You can help the process by recycling properly. Know the list of items that can be recycled and those that cannot. Some stuff simply needs to be put in the trash directly by us as residents. This reduces the sorting necessary and potential contamination of recycled product.

THROW OUT:

- bottle caps of all types, these small items are not easily handled by the sorting equipment.
- Aluminum foil (foil pans are OK).
- Red Solo Cups – I love that song, but they are brittle and not useful in recycling.
- Medical equipment, plastic needles.
- Remove the spray cap/plunger from plastic spray bottles, throw in the trash.
- Shredded paper, it simply won't make it through the rough and tumble of the journey. Likewise small pieces of paper may jam the machinery.
- Plastic bags-take to the grocery store for recycling.

DO RECYCLE:

- Empty metal spray cans (no paint spray cans).
- Foil containers.
- Large plastic items like laundry baskets can be recycled even if no code

A word on pizza boxes. The clean parts of a box may be recycled and the soiled part may be composted. Any doubts, throw it in the trash.

Wish cycling (hoping what you throw in the bin is recyclable) is probably the wrong thing to do. If in doubt, throw it directly in the trash.

If you get a chance take a tour of the MRF. You are bound to learn something new!