



# Facts on Aerosols & The Environment

**FACT: Aerosol cans are made with recycled steel**

Aerosol cans have a minimum of 25% recycled steel.

**FACT: Aerosol cans are easily recycled**

Aerosol are currently being recycled with other empty steel containers in hundreds of communities nationwide. Empty aerosol cans go right along with the flow of other steel cans in the recycling process without any added expense or effort.

**FACT: Aerosol propellants do not damage the ozone layer**

Beginning in 1975, aerosol industry leaders set a new standard by eliminating CFC propellants from aerosols. In 1978, the industry standard became law requiring virtually all aerosol products to be CFC-free.

**FACT: Aerosols have additional benefits**

Aerosols have been used for more than fifty years and continue to be increasingly popular with people because they are efficient and effective. The contents are pre-mixed and delivered at the appropriate pre-measured flow. The sealed container and on/off valve mechanism are airtight so the product always stays fresh, won't become contaminated, leak or spill. They are also tamper resistant and tamper-evident.





# Aerosol Recycling Questions & Answers

## Q: Why recycle aerosols?

**A:** Aerosol cans are made of steel, the world's most recycled material. The benefits of recycling empty steel aerosol cans are threefold: recyclable materials are diverted from landfills; needed steel scrap is more available to the steel industry; and, taxpayer costs are reduced by the revenue from scrap sales. Since the infrastructure already exists for recycling all steel cans, empty aerosol cans go right along with the flow of other steel cans in the recycling process without any added expense or effort.

## Q: What are the instructions for recycling aerosol cans?

**A:** The same as with any other steel food or beverage can: once empty, place the aerosol can in the recycling system with all other steel cans. There is no need to remove any paper labels or plastic parts because they are burned up when the can is melted down during recycling.

## Q: Are aerosol cans recyclable now?

**A:** Yes. Aerosol cans are fully recyclable and are being recycled today in over 2000 communities nationwide with ongoing curbside and drop-off recycling programs.

## Q: How are steel aerosol cans recycled?

**A:** Empty steel aerosol cans may be picked up along with other recyclables (other steel cans, glass, aluminum, paper and plastic) in a curbside collection bin or bag, or they can be taken to a drop off location. After collection, steel cans, including empty aerosol cans, are separated magnetically and processed (crushed or baled) for shipping to steel mills. Aerosol cans may also be captured in a resource recovery facility, where the steel is magnetically separated and recycled, either before or after the combustible materials are consumed to generate electricity.





# Aerosol Recycling Questions & Answers

## Q: Are the steel aerosol cans empty?

**A:** In a Houston-based study conducted by the Steel Recycling Institute, the mean combined residual remaining among all of the collected cans was 2.69% - well below the 3% set by the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations for “empty.” In the study 7,000 aerosol cans of all types – ranging from furniture polishes to pesticides – were collected as part of co-mingled recyclables over a six-week period. They were processed without incident together with the much higher preponderance of other steel can such as food and beverage.

## Q: What if I have a full aerosol can that I want to dispose?

**A:** If a full can is inoperable, it should be returned to the original place of purchase for a replacement or refund. If the full can is operable but no longer wanted, give it to someone else who can use the product.

## Q: Are there ready markets for recycled aerosol cans?

**A:** Yes. Steel cans, including empty aerosol cans, are a good source of high grade recyclable steel. The mills need this quality recyclable steel to make new steel products. Visit the Steel Recycling Locator on [recycle-steel.org](http://recycle-steel.org) to find your nearest location.

## Q: Can I recycle empty aerosol spray paint cans?

**A:** Yes. Once again, when collected these cans are generally empty or nearly empty. Among the cities recycling empty aerosols, spray paint cans are typically included and do not present any processing problems. In the unlikely event that any paint remains in the can during the baling process, it simply “paints” the cans adjacent to it. This does not present any problem to the end markets/mills because they are already handling painted metal from other sources, such as car fenders and appliances.

