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Don't Be a "Wishful Recycler, Recycle Right on America Recycles Day – and Every Day

(Hampton Roads, Nov. 7, 2018) – You've seen the chasing arrows on the bottom of that Styrofoam cup and the tiny number that sits inside the little triangle. It appears to be recyclable, so you toss it in your recycling cart with hopes that it will soon be transformed into a useful, eco-friendly product. In the recycling industry, this scenario is referred to as "wishful recycling"—attempting to recycle items that are not accepted locally, or just not recyclable at all.

In the spirit of America Recycles Day, Nov. 15, askHRgreen.org is encouraging residents to put such wishes aside and brush up on what's recyclable and what's not instead.

"All plastic products have the chasing arrows symbol, but that doesn't make them recyclable. Neither is the takeout pizza box with the oily, cheesy remnants stuck to the bottom," said Rebekah Eastep, an askHRgreen.org team leader. "The best approach to recycling is to know that clean plastic bottles, cans, paper and cardboard are almost always accepted, and to reduce waste in your home and at work."

Local audits of recycling routes in Hampton Roads showed that up to 40 percent of what was collected at the curb was unacceptable. Some of the most common contaminants are food waste, Styrofoam, garden hoses, metal wire, yard debris, diapers, plastic bags, clothing, and dirty take-out containers.

Eastep offered the following guidelines to help residents understand what and how to recycle, in addition to ways to cut back on waste in the first place:

Recycle Right

- Check with your recycling provider to [find out which items are accepted](#) in your recycling bin
- Know that clean plastic bottles, cans, paper and cardboard are almost always accepted
- Don't bag your recyclables, but leave items loose in the bin so they can be sorted easily

- Plastic bags are not accepted in your curbside bin; take them back to the grocery store

Reduce Waste

- Consider reusing or donating an item before you trash it
- Avoid single-use plastics, such as straws, plastic water bottles and plastic bags
- Pack a waste-free lunch and reusable water bottle
- Buy products made with recycled content

A good way to practice your new and improved recycling know-how is to join Americans across the country by participating in an America Recycles Day event near you. Check www.askhrgreen.org/america-recycles-day for Hampton Roads listings of recycling collection events taking place on or around Nov. 15. The events differ by locality, but many include the collection of items that aren't accepted for curbside recycling, such as electronics, plastic bags, ink and toner cartridges, household hazardous waste, documents for shredding, unwanted household items and clothing.

"We hope that these collection events will inspire you to recycle right and reduce waste all year long," said Eastep. "It helps municipalities operate more efficiently by reducing solid waste disposal fees; cutting back on the need to expand and build landfills; and supporting and creating local jobs."

For additional information about recycling and all things green in Hampton Roads, visit www.askHRgreen.org.

About askHRgreen.org

askHRgreen.org is your go-to resource for all things green in Hampton Roads – from recycling tips and pointers for keeping local waterways clean to water-saving ideas and simple steps to make local living easy on the environment. Launched in 2011, the region-wide public awareness and education campaign is administered through the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission and powered by the following members: The cities of Chesapeake, Franklin, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach, and Williamsburg; the counties of Gloucester, Isle of Wight, James City, Southampton, Surry and York; the town of Smithfield; and HRSD. Like askHRgreen.org on [Facebook](#), follow on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), tune in to [YouTube](#) and catch the "Let's Talk Green" [blog](#), written by a team of local experts.