

# Non biodegradable

[Science](#), [Biology](#)



Non-biodegradable waste made up roughly one-third of the municipal solid waste produced in the U. S. in 2009 (see References 1, page 6). The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency recommends recycling whenever possible, and disposing of your trash at a combustion facility or in a landfill only when recycling is not possible (see References 1, page 11). Hazardous waste should be handled separately by your local sanitation department or by private companies that specialize in safe disposal of toxins (see References 2).

Recycling Separate glass, plastic and metal from other non-biodegradable waste for recycling. Many urban and suburban areas have curbside recycling programs; if such a program is not available, take recyclable materials to the nearest collection facility for processing. Recycling saves space in landfills and reduces the amount of virgin materials that must be mined or manufactured to make new products, saving energy and reducing global climate change in the process. (See References 3)

## **Combustion**

Some non-biodegradable waste like used rubber tires and plastic can be burned at combustion facilities. Most of these facilities use the heat generated by incineration to make energy in the form of steam or electricity, which reduces their demand for other nonrenewable resources, including coal and petroleum. In 2009, combustion facilities burned 3.1 million tons of solid waste, mostly used tires. Combustion of municipal waste also reduces the volume of trash that ends up in landfills. (See References 1, page 166)

## **Landfills**

Landfills provide long-term storage for non-biodegradable waste. Ideally, landfills are carefully situated to prevent contamination from entering surrounding soil and water, and managed to reduce odor and pests as much as possible. (See References 4) Federal regulations require careful monitoring in and around the site. Hazardous Waste Disposal Some products like motor oil, pesticides, batteries and paint are potentially hazardous to sanitation workers and the general population as a whole.

They are also more dangerous to the environment than inert materials like plastic or rubber. Many communities offer special collection and disposal programs to deal with household hazardous waste as safely as possible. In areas with no such programs, it's legal to dispose of household hazardous waste in the trash. Follow any special disposal instructions listed on the original container. Before doing so, however, contact the manufacturer or retailer of the material you need to dispose of to ask if they accept old materials for reuse or recycling.