



Waste Reduction News

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Putting the "PET" in Carpet

How a PET Plastic Bottle Makes it to Your Living Room Floor



With a growing concern for waste reduction, companies are finding innovative ways to cycle our recyclables. The PET bottle recycling process is one of today's high-tech marvels. PET is the type of plastic labeled with the #1 code on or near the bottom of the container and is commonly used to package soft drinks, water, juice, peanut butter, salad dressings, oil, cosmetics and household cleaners. Recycling PET enables communities to take what was once considered waste and turn it into a wide range of products, from new bottles to products like polyester clothing and carpet.

Everyone remembers polyester fashion statements of the '70s, but you may be surprised to learn that PET plastic is the same material. It is a form of polyester that can be made into fiber. What's truly fascinating is how plastic bottles are turned into cozy carpet found in homes across America.

The journey from bottle to carpet begins at the curb and at local drop-off bins. Materials are then taken to the materials recovery facility where they are sorted by type. Workers determine if a bottle is made from PET by the number on the bottom and by the containers appearance.

After the bottles are separated, they are baled into large cubes and sent to PET carpet manufacturers where they

are cleaned and ground into flakes. The flake is then washed, heated and rinsed to remove bits of paper and food from the PET. Next, fiber producers melt down the flake until it is the consistency of honey. The honey like substance is then forced through tiny holes the size of a human hair, producing individual filaments or strands. The fibers are then cooled and cut into shorter strands and baled. The bales have nearly the same appearance as a bale of cotton.

Carpet manufacturers then purchase the fiber bales. The fiber is unbaled and spun into spools of yarn. Needles punch the yarn into a backing material and form loops, which are cut at a rate of about 1,200 times a minute, forming the carpet's surface. Then the carpet is heated and dyed. After the dye sets the carpet is inspected, rolled and delivered to a store near you.

Like any other carpet, it goes from the store to your floor. But this carpet does more than compliment a living room; it diverts PET plastic from landfills and gives consumers another incentive to recycle. You can

complete the cycle by recycling and buying recycled products like carPET!

Contact CVWMA at (804) 359-8413 or on the web at www.cvwma.com to receive a copy of **Choose To Reduce**, a waste reduction directory. The directory provides information on ways to recycle and buy recycled.

