CANS

This factsheet is one of a series on waste issues.

7 CANS

Every year in Northern Ireland we dispose of enough aluminium cans, which if placed end to end, would go round The Ulster Way 23 times.

What's it all about?

Steel cans have been used for packaging since 1810 when a Frenchman, Nicholas Appert was challenged by Napoleon to invent a method of preserving food for the French Army.

His invention was the steel can.

The steel can produced today has progressed, and is a lot lighter than that of many years ago. Aluminium cans have also come on the market.

These are light, easy to transport and keep products fresh, making them very desirable for many manufacturers.

On average each person in the country uses 240 steel cans per year and these form about 3.7% of household waste.

Currently the main disposal route for our cans is to landfill sites.

Why Recycle?

Both aluminium and steel are very valuable resources. Extraction of the raw materials for the manufacture of new cans can result in pollution and habitat destruction.

Recycling cans reduces the use of finite resources such as bauxite, iron ore and materials which are mined to produce iron and aluminium.

By using scrap steel instead of iron ore energy savings are over 70%, and emissions can be reduced by about 30% to air and by 60-70% to water.

If you throw away 2 aluminium cans, you waste more energy than is used daily by each of a billion human beings in the developing world.

Why is it so important?

Producing new steel and aluminium is a costly business! BUT it takes only 5% of the energy to produce an aluminium can from recycled material than from raw material, and 25% of the energy compared to producing steel from raw materials.

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What can I do?

- Drinks cans, food cans and pet food tins can all be taken to your nearest can bank.
- Where possible, crush (not aerosols) and wash cans before putting them into recycling banks. It takes up less space which means more cans can be collected.
- Clean aluminium foil, including foil foodtrays, can also be deposited in can banks for recycling.
- Cash for cans schemes – groups may collect cans and sell them on to a processor.

What happens next?

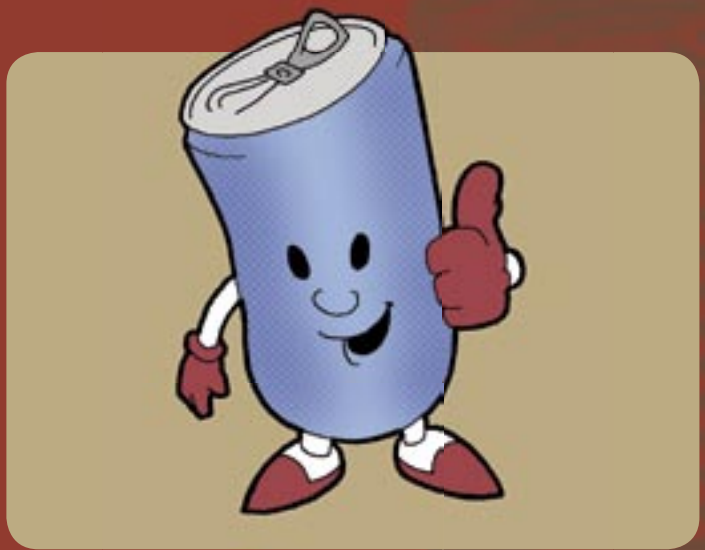
The cans are collected from the recycling facilities and taken to reprocessing plants.

The aluminium cans are separated from the steel cans with a magnet, the steel cans stick.

The aluminium cans are melted down to make big blocks of aluminium which are then rolled to make aluminium sheet which is then used to make new cans.

Aluminium foil is separated and reprocessed into new foil.

Steel cans have the tin coating taken off first and then are melted down to make steel ingots which are used to make construction materials, appliances and new cans.



For Further Information..

Need to find out more?

Alupro scheme **www.alupro.org.uk** or the Alcan scheme **www.cashforcans.co.uk**. Both these websites provide information on collection and recycling of cans.

www.wakeuptowaste.org is the DoE website for the Wake up to Waste campaign. The EHS website is at **www.ehsni.gov.uk** and contains information on the NI Waste Strategy and legislation. **Tel. 028 905 46615**

www.recycledproducts.org.uk contains a guide to products available in the UK that contain recycled materials.

www.wastewatch.org.uk you can download or print other factsheets including buy recycled from this site.

Wake Up To Waste
Reduce Reuse Recycle

An Agency within the Department of the Environment
www.doeni.gov.uk

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