

Half a Million Tonnes of Waste Recycled in Ireland Repak release 2004 recycling figures

(Dublin, 08-09-05) With Dublin and other counties reported to run out of landfill space by as early as December 2007¹, Irish people successfully recycled almost half a million tonnes of used packaging last year, according to Repak figures. The figures were released in the run up to Repak Recycling Week which takes place from the 3rd to the 9th October and revealed that 47% of all packaging waste was recovered in 2004. Enough used packaging was recovered to fill 239,500 refuse trucks which would stretch in a traffic jam the length of the country from Cork to Donegal. In individual material types alone, Ireland recovered the equivalent of:

- 5.2 million trees worth of cardboard, paper and wood
- 2 million fleeces worth of plastic P.E.T. bottles
- 3.7 million plastic recycling boxes worth of HDPE plastic bottles
- 442 million household refuse bags worth of other plastics
- 108 million drink cans worth of aluminium
- 109 million food cans worth of steel
- 285 million bottles worth of glass

Commenting on the figures Andrew Hetherington, CEO, Repak, said, "Ireland has achieved a lot of success in recycling in a relatively short space of time and this year's results shows the great efforts industry, Government and people throughout Ireland are making. The introduction of pay-by-weight charges and issues of incineration and landfill have meant that waste management has become an increasingly prioritised issue and with Repak Recycling Week approaching we want to encourage people to continue their efforts in improving Ireland's environment."

Paper, Cardboard and Wood

Ireland recycled 200,523 tonnes of paper and cardboard packaging last year, 42% of all cardboard and paper packaging, a 14% increase on 2003. Ireland also recycled 106,000 tonnes of wood, a 20% increase on 2003. Combined, this is equivalent to 5,200,000 mature conifer trees, which would on average, if forested, cover over 50 square miles which is enough to cover all of Dublin City². It is also estimated that enough paper and cardboard was recycled to save a staggering 1,279,183,238 gallons of water from reduced processing. This is enough water to fill almost 4,000 Olympic size swimming pools. It is also enough recyclable material for 80 million reams of A4 paper or over 4,000 million sheets.

¹ Source: Irish Independent article, 23rd August 2005, by Charlie Weston.

<http://www.unison.ie/business/stories.php3?ca=80&si=1455709>

² 44.4 sq miles is the area of the centre of Dublin City according to Dublin City Council

Glass

87,717 tonnes of glass was recycled, 63% of glass on the market and an increase of 17% on 2003. This is enough glass to make 285,080,250 wine bottles. If this glass was sent to landfill instead of being recycled, it would fill over 890,000 large wheelie bins, which is 70% of all household bins in the country. The recycling of this quantity of glass also saves enough energy to power a light bulb in every house in Ireland for 37 days continuously or one light bulb for 130,173 years.

Plastic

Repak helped fund the recycling of nearly 21% of all used plastic packaging. This was split between farm film, shrink wrap and PET plastic bottles and HDPE plastic bottles. A total of 39,000 tonnes of total plastic was recycled, which represents an increase of almost 15% on 2003. Enough PET plastic drinks bottles was recycled to make 2,037,037 fleeces, equivalent to 55 million plastic bottles and enough HDPE plastic bottles to make 3,666,667 plastic recycling boxes and enough plastic film to make 442 million plastic refuse bags. Almost 5,000 tonnes of rigid plastic bottles were collected from recycling centres and some household collection schemes, which is an increase of 134% on 2003 volumes. This represented approximately 14% of all plastic bottles or 110,000,000 bottles collected or 27.5 bottles per person in Ireland.

Aluminium / Steel

Repak recovered 46,000 tonnes of metal, almost 50% of all metal placed on the market accounting for almost 10% of the total weight of materials collected. 1,800 tonnes of aluminium was recovered, which is equivalent to 138 million beverage cans. This quantity of aluminium could be made into 16,194 bicycles. Recycling this quantity of aluminium saved enough energy to power a TV in every house in Ireland for 10 and a half days. 44,000 tonnes of steel was recovered, which is equivalent to 1,093 million steel food cans and enough material to make on average 57,541 cars.

Repak has driven recycling rates from under 15% in 1998 to in excess of 47% in 2004. Last year, Repak also exceeded the 15% minimum recycling target for 2005 in all material types and is well on its way to meeting the 2005 EU packaging recovery target of 50%.

81% of the volumes recycled in 2004 came from commercially sourced used packaging while domestically recycled packaging accounted for 19% of volumes. At 92,000 tonnes the domestic sector saw an increase of 24% on the amount recycled in 2003 while the commercial sector at 387,000 tonnes witnessed a 14% increase on the previous year.

Other highlights of 2004 for Repak included:

- Achieving the placement of 294 new bring bank sites co-funded by Repak/DoEHLG.
- Funding kerbside dry recycling collections reaching in excess of 450,000 households, as well as supporting over 2000 bring banks and 60 recycling centres.
- Recycling of 1,650 tonnes of aluminium drinks cans or c100 million cans.
- Extending the trial collection of used beverage cartons to include all Repak funded kerbside collection schemes include Dublin.

The 5th annual Repak Recycling Week takes place between the 3rd and 9th of October. The theme for the week is “Keep Recycling – let’s get it sorted”, and features a series of nationwide educational and promotional campaigns. Repak Recycling Week aims to get as many people recycling the maximum amount of packaging during the week and help Ireland this year achieve its 2005 EU target. In 2005, Repak are targeting to collect 535,000 tonnes or in excess of 50% of used packaging for recycling.

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About Repak

Repak is a not-for-profit voluntary members based packaging recycling scheme established under a voluntary agreement between industry and the Department of the Environment and Local Government. It was established as industry’s response to the obligations placed on Ireland by the EU directive on Packaging Waste (94/62/EC) and is the only government approved compliance scheme under the Waste Management (Packaging) Regulations 1997. Repak succeeded in reaching and exceeding Ireland’s EU National Packaging Recovery and Recycling Target of 25% of packaging waste in 2001.

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