

# "one man's trash..."

Solid Waste District of La Porte County

Your guide to reducing, reusing, and recycling



## Keep La Porte County Clean



Credit: RealPeopleGroup | E+ | Getty Images

Litter is not only unsightly but also poses significant health risks to both humans and animals. Items like cigarette butts, discarded plastic bottles, fast-food wrappers, sharp metal cans, plastic shopping bags, and disposable face masks clutter our parks, playgrounds, roadsides, and waterways. Natural elements such as wind and water, along with animals and traffic, disperse this litter, sending it into storm drains, entangling it in fences and trees, and scattering it across lawns and parking lots. Often, this debris ends up in our rivers, lakes, and oceans, causing severe problems for fish, birds, and other wildlife.

According to the Keep America Beautiful 2020 National Litter Study, there are nearly 50 billion pieces of litter along U.S. roadways and waterways, equating to approximately 152 items per person. While litter along roadways has decreased by 54% since 2009, a substantial amount remains, with slightly more litter found along waterways (25.9 billion pieces) than roadways (23.7 billion pieces).

La Porte County Solid Waste District's Clean It Up! program is part of the Great American Cleanup. The national nonprofit group Keep America Beautiful sponsors the Great American Cleanup each year, with

more than 15,000 communities participating in cleanup and community improvement activities nationwide.

The Clean It Up! program welcomes families, communities, organizations, and businesses to participate. The program provides necessary supplies and guidance to ensure a safe and successful experience. Volunteers receive gloves, trash bags, and bottled water to stay hydrated while they work. Many La Porte County groups have already volunteered, including political and religious organizations, school clubs, scout troops, civic organizations, businesses, and families. To sign up or to donate supplies for this event, contact Sacha Gee-Burns at 219-326-0014 or [sgeeburns@solidwastedistrict.com](mailto:sgeeburns@solidwastedistrict.com). Special thanks to Family Express for donating bottled water for this event!

Whether or not you have littered in the past, you can be part of the solution. Educate friends and family about the harms of littering. By collectively choosing to stop littering, we can ensure a healthier environment for people and wildlife, and our roads, streams, and public spaces will become more beautiful than ever before.

Thank you for your commitment to keeping our community clean!

## Free Programs Offered to Answer Recycling Questions

We are available to visit businesses, clubs, classrooms, and organizations within our District to provide free programs on recycling and composting. Some of our most popular programs are How to Recycle Right, Composting 101, and Green Cleaning. However, we can design a program that fits your needs and answers your specific questions. We can even provide free employee training about recycling to area businesses. Contact Environmental Educator and Public Outreach Coordinator Sacha Gee-Burns at [sgeeburns@solidwastedistrict.com](mailto:sgeeburns@solidwastedistrict.com) or 219-326-0014 for details.



### Turner Talks Trash

from the Executive Director's Desk

Reducing waste doesn't have to be complicated—small changes can add up to a big impact. Whether it's cutting down on packaging, reusing everyday items, or making sure recyclables end up in the right place, there are plenty of ways to make a difference this spring and beyond.

#### Reduce

Reducing waste takes a little planning, but small changes can make a big difference. Cooking meals from fresh ingredients not only cuts down on packaging waste but also promotes healthier eating and saves money. Growing your own food in a garden is another great way to limit packaging waste while enjoying fresh, homegrown produce. Eating out less also helps reduce the number of disposable containers that end up in landfills.

Consider how you can minimize your use of single-use plastic items. Plastic shopping bags, disposable utensils, straws, drink cups, and fast-food packaging often litter our land and waterways. Saying "no, thank you" to items you don't need is a simple way to cut down on waste. If you're taking food home, consider skipping plastic utensils and paper napkins. When purchasing just a few items, ask yourself if you really need a plastic shopping bag, especially if you forgot your reusable one.

Paper waste is another area where small changes count. Are you using both sides of your paper? Selecting two-sided printing or using the back of paper for drafts, notes, or lists can reduce waste and lower costs. Before printing, think about whether you truly need a hard copy and print only the pages you require. Using less paper also means using less ink, which saves money and reduces waste.

There are countless ways to cut down on waste—get creative and find what works best for your lifestyle!

#### Reuse

Reusing items is already a habit for most people, but expanding that habit can make a significant difference. Towels, sheets, dishes, pots, pans, and clothes are everyday items we reuse without thinking about it. Expanding this mindset can help reduce waste even further. Consider reusing shopping bags, lunch bags with washable containers, and even travel mugs for coffee and water bottles for drinks on the go. Taking advantage of local library resources, including books, CDs, DVDs, and digital downloads, is another excellent way to reuse and reduce waste. Instead of purchasing new, consider borrowing or sharing resources with others.

Upcycling, or turning old items into something new, is a fun and creative way to extend the life of household items. Old T-shirts can be transformed into reusable shopping bags. Empty cereal boxes can become magazine holders, and salt containers can be repurposed as matching pen and pencil cups. Searching online for "recycled crafts" will lead you to plenty of DIY ideas.

If you have items in good condition that you no longer need, consider selling them at a garage sale, secondhand store, or through online marketplaces, such as Facebook Marketplace, Nextdoor, or OfferUp. If selling seems like a hassle, give items away through Freecycle or donate them to charitable organizations that can put them to good use.

#### Recycle

In 2025, most people are familiar with recycling paper, boxes, cans, bottles, and jars in their household recycling bins. However, other items, like electronics, can also be recycled, just not in your curbside bin. Be sure to recycle your old electronics at one of our electronics recycling drop-off trailers. For drop-off locations or to learn more about electronics recycling, visit [www.solidwastedistrict.com/electronic-recycling](http://www.solidwastedistrict.com/electronic-recycling).

Food waste is another area where recycling can play a role. Instead of throwing fruit and vegetable scraps in the trash, add them to a backyard compost bin or pile. Composting enriches soil, supports plant growth, and reduces the amount of waste sent to landfills.

Clay

"IN EVERY WALK WITH NATURE, ONE RECEIVES FAR MORE THAN HE SEEKS." ~ JOHN MUIR

# Celebrating Earth Day



Credit: FG Trade Latin | E+ | Getty Images

As land, air, and water pollution affected more and more people in the mid-20th century, preservation became a growing concern in the United States. By April 22, 1970, Gaylord Nelson, a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, had planned a national “teach-in” for the environment, marking the first Earth Day.

“Literally millions of Americans of all ages and from all walks of life participated in Earth Day celebrations from coast to coast,” Nelson noted in a 1980 article about the 10th anniversary of Earth Day in the *EPA Journal*. That first Earth Day not only raised awareness but also led to actions that improved the quality of our air, water, and land, protecting people and property, as well as fish and wildlife.

April 22, 2025, marked the 55th anniversary of Earth Day. After 55 years of environmental education, preservation, and conservation, it is as important now as ever

to think about the environment and how our actions impact it. This is also a great time to celebrate the natural world and show our thanks for the many ways it supports us, giving us the ability to live and thrive. Get outside and enjoy our environment and the abundance of life it sustains. You could go for a hike, a walk, a run, or a bike ride. Look around and pay attention to the changes that spring brings to the natural world. Breathe the fresh air.

Nelson said, “So long as the human species inhabits the Earth, proper management of its resources will be the most fundamental issue we face. Our very survival will depend upon whether or not we are able to preserve, protect, and defend our environment.”

To learn more about Earth Day and what you can do every day to care for the planet, check out [EPA.gov/EarthDay](http://EPA.gov/EarthDay) or [EarthDay.org](http://EarthDay.org).



Credit: neer kungking | iStock | Getty Images Plus

## Free Yard Waste Drop-Off

La Porte County residents may drop off yard waste at no charge at the Compost Facility, located north of the Fairgrounds, across from NIPSCO, at 724 Zigler Road in La Porte. (Businesses may also drop off yard waste but will be charged a tipping fee.) Spring hours began on April 5, after which the Compost Facility is open Monday through Saturday, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Drop off your grass clippings, brush, and logs, and we will work our magic and transform them into nutrient-rich compost and useful mulch. If you collect your yard waste in the large paper yard waste bags available from home improvement stores,

they do not need to be emptied because the PAPER bags are compostable. However, you must empty all plastic bags or bins that you use to haul your leaves or clippings and then take the bags and containers home to reuse or dispose. Leave only yard waste, please. Please follow all signs at the facility. NO trash is accepted at this facility. All loads will be inspected before you are allowed to drop off your yard waste.

When available, residents can purchase and self-haul compost and natural mulch for \$15 per cubic yard. Visit our website at [www.solidwastedistrict.com](http://www.solidwastedistrict.com) for additional details.



## SOLID WASTE DISTRICT OF LA PORTE COUNTY MASTER RECYCLER PROGRAM SPRING 2025

Join this **FREE** class and help to become advocates for recycling.

Program consists of six two-hour classes and at least four optional field trips.

Classes begin May 14th and occur weekly at 6pm, through June 18th.

Call to sign up today at 219-326-0014

or email [sgeeburns@solidwastedistrict.com](mailto:sgeeburns@solidwastedistrict.com)



2857 W. State Road 2  
La Porte, IN 46350

## The Safe Way to Handle Batteries

Lithium batteries are widely used in everyday devices, from smartphones to power tools, but they require careful handling to prevent safety hazards such as overheating and fire risks. Proper storage, charging, and disposal practices help ensure both safety and environmental responsibility.

To maintain their stability and prolong their lifespan, lithium batteries should be stored in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight and extreme temperatures. Heat and cold can cause batteries to degrade more quickly, making them less efficient and more prone to failure. It is also important to avoid storing them in metal containers or near flammable materials, as these conditions increase the risk of fire. Physical damage, such as dropping, crushing, or puncturing a battery, can lead to internal short circuits that may result in overheating or fires. If a battery appears dented, swollen, or leaking, it should no longer be used.

Charging lithium batteries correctly is just as important as storing them safely. Using the charger designed for a specific battery type and capacity helps prevent overcharging, which can shorten the battery's lifespan and pose serious safety risks. Once a battery is fully charged, it should be removed from the charger to avoid overcharging. Leaving batteries unattended while charging or placing them on flammable surfaces such as bedding



Credit: D3Damon | iStock | Getty Images Plus

or furniture increases the risk of fire and should always be avoided. Regularly inspecting lithium batteries for signs of damage, such as bulging, leakage, or unusual odors, is essential for safety. If any abnormalities are detected, battery use should be discontinued immediately. Damaged or expired lithium batteries should never be thrown in the trash, as they can cause fires in waste collection trucks and recycling facilities.

To reduce the risk of battery-related fires, battery buckets will be removed from community collection sites. Instead, drop-off containers are now available at the Compost Site located at 724 Zigler Road in La Porte, which is open Monday through Saturday, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Additionally, lithium batteries can be safely disposed of at household hazardous waste events. Many electronics retailers also offer battery recycling services, making it easy to dispose of old batteries responsibly.



Credit: Canyon Images | iStock | Getty Images Plus

## Grasscycling Saves Time and Feeds Grass

Spring is here. No doubt you've pulled out the lawnmower, or at least thought about it. As you begin another mowing season, it's time to think about "grasscycling."

Grasscycling is allowing your grass clippings to drop back onto the lawn as you mow. Instead of picking up the clippings with the mower's bagging attachment, you let them drop onto the grass. These short clippings decompose quickly. As a result, the clippings, which are about 80% water, provide your lawn with needed moisture. Grass clippings also contain nitrogen, a fertilizer that your lawn needs. When you grasscycle, your lawn produces and consumes some of its own "homemade" fertilizer, reducing the amount of fertilizer that you will need to buy and apply.

In addition to helping water and fertilize your lawn, grasscycling also reduces your waste. When you leave clippings on the lawn, you have no clippings to bag, carry, or dispose. When you are done mowing, you are done with the work! And you'll be done more quickly, too. Grasscycling takes about one-third less time than mowing and bagging.

You don't need a mulching mower to grasscycle. Any mower can become a mulching, or grasscycling, mower. Simply remove the bagging attachment. If the bagger on your mower attaches to the back of the mowing deck, be sure that the discharge chute is covered after you remove the bag. You may need to insert a "chute cover." If you have a side discharge mower, you won't need to do anything more than remove the bagger.

No matter what kind of mower you use, you should be "trimming" your grass. In other words, give it regular trims, not one big "haircut." Each time you mow, you should trim the top one-third or less off your lawn. If the grass is growing quickly, you may have to mow more than once a week. The small clippings will quickly begin to rot before the next mowing. If you chop off more than one-third in a single mowing, it is hard on the grass plants, and you leave behind long clippings that take longer to break down.

If you grasscycle most of the time and bag occasionally, remember that you can use grass clippings as mulch around plants or add them to your compost pile or bin.



## 2025 Household Hazardous Waste Schedule

### MAY 7-IN-1

Saturday, May 17th – 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

La Porte County Fair Grounds – 2581 W. State Road 2

Tires, Appliances, Electronics, Shredding, Styrofoam, Cardboard & HHW (including batteries, fluorescent bulbs, oil-based paint, ammunition, sharps & medication)

### JUNE

Saturday, June 14th – 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

La Porte County Fair Grounds – 2581 W. State Road 2

Household Hazardous Waste ONLY (including batteries, fluorescent bulbs, oil-based paint, sharps & medication)

## Keep Contaminants Out of Your Bin



Credit: Ryan Lane | iStock | Getty Images

Recycling contamination might seem like a minor issue, but its effects are widespread, impacting the environment, economy, and sustainability efforts. When non-recyclable items end up in recycling bins, they can ruin entire batches of recyclables, forcing them to be sent to landfills. This not only wastes valuable resources but also makes recycling less effective and contributes to the growing problem of overflowing landfills.

Contamination also poses risks to recycling facilities and workers. Hazardous materials, such as chemicals or sharp objects, can cause injuries or damage to equipment during the sorting process. These incidents not only endanger the safety of workers, but they also incur additional costs for repairs.

To mitigate the negative effects of contamination, take simple steps to ensure proper recycling practices. Start by labeling bins clearly inside your home as a reminder of what can and cannot be recycled. Simple, visible labels can make a big difference in preventing mistakes. When recycling bottles and other containers, make sure they are empty, clean, and dry. Remove excess residue, rinse them out, and allow them to air-dry before placing them in the bin. If an item has a cap or lid, secure it back on

before recycling.

Knowing which plastics can be recycled is essential. Check for the recycling triangle on plastics and make sure they contain a number between 1 and 7 before placing them in the bin. If an item does not have a number, call 219-326-0014 for assistance in determining the best disposal solution. Space in recycling bins can be maximized by breaking down and flattening cardboard boxes. If necessary, cut them into pieces no larger than 18 by 18 inches before placing them in the bin. If you have excess cardboard or other recyclables that don't fit in your bin, you can use one of the public recycling dumpsters located at the Compost Site, Hanna County Highway Garage, or Michigan City Central Services.

Recyclables should always be placed in the bin loose rather than in bags. Keeping materials unbagged allows for efficient processing at recycling facilities. Dirty recyclables, greasy pizza boxes, and especially diapers should be disposed of in the trash rather than placed in the recycling bin. For more recycling tips, visit [www.solidwastedistrict.com](http://www.solidwastedistrict.com). Be sure to check our accepted recycling items guide for assistance in determining whether an item is recyclable.

### JULY

Saturday, July 12th – 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Michigan City Marquette Mall West Parking Lot

Household Hazardous Waste ONLY (including batteries, fluorescent bulbs, oil-based paint, sharps & medication)

### AUGUST

Saturday, August 16th – 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Kankakee Valley REMC – 8642 W. Hwy 30, Wanatah

Electronics & Household Hazardous Waste (including batteries, fluorescent bulbs, oil-based paint, sharps & medication)

### SEPTEMBER 7-IN-1

Saturday, September 13th – 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

La Porte County Fair Grounds – 2581 W. State Road 2

Tires, Appliances, Electronics, Shredding, Styrofoam, Cardboard & HHW (including batteries, fluorescent bulbs, oil-based paint, ammunition, sharps & medication)

### OCTOBER

Saturday, October 18th – 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Michigan City Marquette Mall West Parking Lot

Household Hazardous Waste ONLY (including batteries, fluorescent bulbs, oil-based paint, sharps & medication)

For more details, visit:  
[www.solidwastedistrict.com](http://www.solidwastedistrict.com)

# Skip Single-Use Plastics

Plastic straws are a prime example of the sort of plastic item Americans have grown used to using once and throwing away. It's hard to picture something as small as a plastic straw being an issue. A school bus is much larger. Imagine 127 school buses lined up. This line would be over a mile long. Now picture the inside of all of those buses completely stuffed with plastic straws. This is how many plastic straws Americans use in just one day, about 500 million. Now you can begin to see the magnitude of the issue.

The good news is that everyone can do their part to help. Just remember that it is always better to refuse, reduce, reuse, and recycle than to use something once and then throw it away. You can help by remembering to make simple changes each day. Start with a goal of changing one plastic habit per week or month and then add new changes throughout the year. Talk to your friends and family about making these changes, too!

Here is how you can be part of the solution:

- Just say no to plastic straws or stir sticks at restaurants or places where they are offered. If you really like using straws, consider buying a reusable metal one and taking it with you.

- Instead of plastic shopping bags, use reusable shopping bags.
- Try to use fewer disposable items. At fast food restaurants, take a refillable water bottle or cup and use it instead of a throwaway cup. When buying fruits or vegetables at the store, use reusable bags or consider not using bags at all.
- Cut down on plastic and Styrofoam by using washable or paper plates.
- Make your own takeout kit. You can carry your own reusable containers instead of asking for single-use carryout containers.
- Did you know that many of our groceries have a bulk food area? You may be able to bring your own reusable containers from home to fill with food instead of using the plastic bags provided.

After you have refused and reused all that you can, you should recycle all the plastics that are recyclable. All recyclables should be empty, clean, and dry. Plastic straws, forks, spoons, cup lids, loose bottle caps, and other small single-use plastic items are too small for us to recycle. When in doubt, go find out! Visit [www.solidwastedistrict.com](http://www.solidwastedistrict.com) for our accepted recycling items guide for assistance in determining whether an item is recyclable.

# Putting a Stop to Illegal Dumping



Discarding trash or other unwanted items in empty lots, along highways, or in other nonapproved locations is considered illegal dumping, and it is against the law. Dumped items frequently include furniture, appliances, tires, construction waste, household trash, and hazardous materials. Oftentimes these illegally dumped items attract curious children — posing significant health and safety risks. Dirty diapers and food trash attract rodents, insects, and other vermin. Dumping items pollutes the soil and water and destroys Indiana's natural beauty. Please be sure to landfill or recycle items you no longer want or need.

To report illegal dumping, please contact the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) online at [www.in.gov/idem/5274.htm](http://www.in.gov/idem/5274.htm) or call 800-451-6027 and select option 3. All reports are confidential. Keep our environment clean, safe, and healthy — now and for generations to come.



## Drop Off Your Plastic Bags for Recycling!

Recycle plastic grocery bags, shrink wrap, case wrappers, bubble wrap, deflated plastic packing pillows, clean zippered plastic storage bags, bread bags, and other plastic bags in special bins at our office, located at 2857 W. State Road 2 in La Porte. Many grocery and home improvement stores also accept empty, clean plastic bags and films for recycling. Remember — no plastic bags in your blue curbside toters! Our thanks to WM, GIS Insurance, AI's Supermarkets, Republic Services, NIPSCO, Tradebe, and Borden Waste-Away for supplying reusable shopping bags that we've given to residents over the past year.

## Join the District's Waste Advisory Committee

The Solid Waste District of La Porte County is seeking applicants for an open position on the Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC). This is a two-year term, with meetings held four times a year. The CAC plays an important role in addressing solid waste issues by investigating, debating, and making recommendations to the Solid Waste District Board.

Members may work on issues assigned by the Board or initiate projects that align with the goals of the district's Strategic Plan. Interested individuals should submit a Letter of Intent to the Solid Waste District of La Porte County at 2857 W. State Road 2, La Porte, IN 46350, or email [sgeeburns@solidwastedistrict.com](mailto:sgeeburns@solidwastedistrict.com) by June 1, 2025. For more information, contact Sacha Gee-Burns, Public Outreach Coordinator.



**LAPORTE COUNTY  
RECYCLING**

Solid Waste District

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**We want your suggestions, questions, and comments!**

**Solid Waste District of La Porte County**  
2857 W. State Road 2  
La Porte, IN 46350

(219) 326-0014 • (800) 483-7700

[www.solidwastedistrict.com](http://www.solidwastedistrict.com)

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