

STYROFOAM Extruded Polystyrene Insulation and the Environment

The environment is on everyone's mind these days, and the people at Dow are no exception. We are doing all we can to help ensure that future generations can continue using our products in a world that's safe and clean.

First, a few facts

STYROFOAM* is a registered trademark for a line of extruded polystyrene products made exclusively by Dow. STYROFOAM extruded polystyrene products are primarily Blue* in color, and the exceptions are in the floral and craft markets, where STYROFOAM extruded polystyrene is white or green. In a special product for the commercial cavity wall market, the foam is black.

STYROFOAM extruded polystyrene is NOT used in the manufacture of fast-food packaging meat and egg trays, cups, plates, coolers or packaging fill. These disposable foam products are made of either molded expanded polystyrene beads or of thin extruded foam polystyrene sheet, neither of which is a STYROFOAM extruded polystyrene product nor manufactured by Dow in North America.

So while STYROFOAM extruded polystyrene is used all around the world, we guarantee that it is not in the fast-food trays you see.

What, then, is in our landfills?

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), plastics make up only 9 percent of municipal solid waste generated in this country. This includes all plastics, such as beverage containers, TV sets and refrigerator components. The percentage of all plastic foam products in landfills (including food packaging) is estimated at less than 1/2 of 1 percent, and STYROFOAM extruded polystyrene products make up only a tiny fraction of that. Ironically, plastic foam materials have been shown to consume less energy during manufacture and contribute less waste to landfills than products made of alternative materials like paper.

Recycling plastics...we lead the way

Compared to many other materials used in packaging and durable materials, plastics are relatively new. Thus, recycling is also relatively new for plastics. But that's not to say plastics aren't being recycled – four times as many plastic bottles are being recycled today as there were in 1990. As more and more communities around the country embrace plastics recycling, the amount of plastics recycled will continue to grow.

Does Dow recycle?

Dow has been recycling STYROFOAM extruded polystyrene and other production scrap for more than four decades. It simply doesn't pay to throw away a perfectly good resource when it can easily be recycled right back into another lot of STYROFOAM extruded polystyrene products.

Reducing waste at the source is one of the most effective ways to save resources and energy. The WRAP program, or Waste Reduction always Pays, plus our involvement with the U.S. EPA's Waste Wi\$e voluntary reduction program have tracked numerous efforts to eliminate waste in our plants and then recycle as much of what remains as we can. In 1996, our North American facilities recycled more than 140 million pounds of materials ranging from steel scrap and wood pallets to office paper and STYROFOAM extruded polystyrene products.

For more information on Dow and the environment, read *The Story Behind Blowing Agents*.

*Trademark of The Dow Chemical Company

Copyright © The Dow Chemical Company
(1995–2002). All Rights Reserved.