

Recycling in the bag

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Global Recycling Day - 18 March 2022 - Good news for waste collectors - paper grocery and take-away food bags can be collected for recycling



The circular waste economy is a thriving network of collectors, buyers and processors, using recyclables such as wastepaper to make new products. Every year, more than 1.1 million tonnes of paper and paper packaging are recovered in South Africa and recycled into new products that we use every day. These products can then be recycled again, in many cases up to 25 times.

Paper recycling is largely based on different grades of paper. In industry speak cardboard boxes are termed K4 while used white office paper is termed as HL1 (heavy letter 1). Cereal boxes, egg cartons and other similar paper items are deemed common mixed waste (CMW).

Thankfully, citizens only need to know whether something is recyclable or not. Once packaging or a recyclable product leaves our home with a waste collector or recycling company, they tend not to think about where it goes.

For a waste collector who sells our recyclables to a buy-back centre or recycling branch, the type of paper – and the value they get for it – is significant.

It is important for the respective grades to be separated and baled together as they form the ingredients for the paper products they will be recycled into.

For example, old cardboard boxes and paper bags will be repulped into other paper types; that will become cardboard boxes and paper bags. Used white paper is recycled into tissue products such as toilet paper while several paper grades are recycled into common household packaging such as matchboxes, tooth paste boxes and cereal boxes.

“With paper bags now synonymous with suburban and city-based grocery deliveries after Covid kept many of us away from supermarkets, Detpak and its customers felt that it was important to close the loop with the production and recycling of paper bags,” explains Carla Breytenbach, marketing manager for Detpak.

On Friday, 4 March, Detpak, Remade Recycling (part of the Mpact Group) and Fibre Circle teamed up to show 200 collectors that paper grocery bags, as well as brown take-away food bags, can be collected from households and sold with their waste paper collections.

At Remade Recycling’s Midrand branch, small groups of collectors were invited to a discussion and demonstration by Anele Sololo, manager for education and SMME development at Fibre Circle, the producer responsibility organisation of the paper and paper packaging sector.

After this, each collector received a pie and soft drink, along with a paper goodie bag, naturally in the same material that makes grocery bags, containing a reflective T-shirt, sun hat, safety gloves, fresh fruit and a box of Smarties, also in a recyclable paper box. “Safety and visibility is a key aspect in the lives of collectors who navigate the busy streets of our suburbs daily making an honest living,” notes Donna-Mari Noble, communications manager for the Recycling business, which includes Remade Recycling.

With Global Recycling Day coming up on Friday, 18 March, what better way to contribute to the circular economy than by adding your paper bags to your recycling?” If you are not recycling yet, start simple by putting out recyclables such as cardboard boxes, pizza boxes, grocery bags and other similar packaging on your pavement for recycling collectors.

For more information follow us on LinkedIn or visit <https://www.remade.co.za/2022/03/10/recycli>

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Mpact



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