

## **NextStep Recycling no longer accepting EPS foam for recycling**

*By NextStep Recycling*

*Dated: Jun 27, 2009*

*NextStep Recycling announced today that due to increased costs, EPS block foam (commonly referred to as Styrofoam) will no longer be accepted at their Eugene, OR recycling facility beginning July 1, 2009.*

Eugene, OR - Over the last 4 years, NextStep Recycling staff estimate they have recycled over 288 tons (576,000 pounds) of EPS foam for Lane County residents, businesses, and municipalities. EPS foam is 98% air. NextStep has collected EPS foam at its Eugene facility, at community cleanup events, and provided pickup services for local businesses. Presently, the block foam is baled, densified, and transported to PLC Recycling in Portland, OR where it is then extruded and sold to a company that manufactures high-end picture frames from the recycled material. Due to lack of funds, NextStep will no longer be offering this recycling service.

“We wish we could continue to provide this much needed service for our community, but, we are losing money with every piece of foam we accept,” reports Lorraine Kerwood Executive Director, NextStep Recycling. “Since we are an organization that focuses on electronics reuse, our income has been dramatically impacted by the new electronics recycling law. EPS foam recycling was a service we provided because it was needed in Lane County. There is no one else handling this volume of material locally. But, if we are going to keep our doors open, we need to focus on our mission, which includes job and social skills training, education, electronics refurbishing, reuse, and recycling. We can no longer afford to subsidize the EPS foam recycling program.” Kerwood adds that NextStep will continue to accept packing peanuts for reuse.

Styrofoam is a trademark of the Dow Chemical, but the material itself is called EPS - expanded polystyrene foam or block foam. EPS foam is commonly used in packing material as peanuts or expanded foam, in food trays, as an insulator, in bicycle helmets, toys, and a wide variety of other products. Packaging and products containing expanded polystyrene can sometimes be identified by a recycling triangle logo with the number 6 stamped on the item.

EPS foam takes up valuable landfill space, is not compactable, and does not biodegrade.

Although Styrofoam breaks into pieces easily, it is estimated that it will take 500 years for one foam cup to dissolve.

Our nation averages 547,945 tons of garbage per day and EPS foam products make up 0.25% of this weight. By volume, EPS foam waste takes up 25-30% of our nation's landfill space.

Every year, the United States generates approximately 230 million tons of "trash"--about 4.6 pounds per person per day. Less than one-quarter of it is recycled; the rest is incinerated or buried in landfills.

However, EPS foam is an excellent material for recycling. Post-consumer and post-commercial EPS is currently being recycled at an average annual rate of 10-12%. A pound of polystyrene recycled is a pound of new polystyrene that doesn't have to be created.

“NextStep staff are dismayed that we can no longer offer this highly requested service to our community. But, in this economy, we have to look at what services we provide that have the greatest impact on our residents and our environment,” said Kerwood. “Refurbishing and redistributing technology and keeping electronics waste out of our landfill is taking precedence over recycling EPS foam. But, it is not lack of

desire on our part to keep EPS foam out of Short Mountain Landfill, we just can't afford to continue to do so".

EPS foam is not recyclable curbside in Lane County.

Where can Lane County residents take EPS foam? PORTLAND, OR

Pacific Land Clearing & Recycling, N. Portland

(503) 285-8777

4044 N Suttle Rd., Portland

FREE FOAM RECYCLING FOR RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES

Total Reclaim / EcoLights Northwest

(503) 281-1899

5805 NE Columbia Blvd., Portland

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NextStep's mission is to provide technology and training to children and adults who have barriers to education and employment. To date NextStep has redistributed over 18,000 computers and 250,000+ pieces of technology to our most marginalized populations. In 2008, NextStep recycled responsibly over 8,000,000 pounds of electronics waste.

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#### FAST FACTS:

EPS foam Components: Benzene, Styrene, Ethelene

Blowing Agents: a "blowing agent" is what is used to make EPS foam 30 times lighter than its original weight.

#### CFCs

Up until the late 1970's CFCs, or Chlorofluorocarbons, were used as the blowing agents for Styrofoam production. The main CFC blowing agent was Isobutylene. This was phased out due to growing knowledge of the relationship between CFCs and global warming and replaced with HCFCs combined with Ethylene.

#### HCFCs

Hydrochloroflorocarbons are thought to be less harmful than CFCs. HCFCs are reportedly 90% less harmful than CFCs. For Styrofoam production, generally HCFC-22 is combined with Ethylene to create Ethylene Oxide (22% Ethylene). It is much debated whether HCFCs are better for the environment.

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NextStep educates and empowers marginalized populations by providing refurbished computers that allow access to technology and the Internet. NS recycles computer hardware and other electronics, keeping hazardous waste out of our soil and water.

Category Environment, Electronics, Non Profit

Tags Computers, recycling, styrofoam, eps foam, nextstep, nextstep recycling, volunteer, environment, landfill, eugene, or

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