



Study: More recycling could create thousands of new jobs in Indiana

Indiana manufacturers – and Hoosiers – would benefit from policies that encourage recycling

INDIANAPOLIS (Dec. 4, 2013) – A new study conducted by the Bowen Center for Public Affairs at Ball State University shows that Indiana’s recycling industry is a grossly underutilized jobs resource. According to the study, even an incremental increase in recycling could create 10,000 new jobs in Indiana.

The Indiana Recycling Coalition, which commissioned the study, is a nonprofit organization that works to conserve natural resources, reduce energy use, encourage environmental responsibility and create green jobs through recycling.

Today, 66 percent of what gets thrown away by Hoosiers could be recovered and used as raw material by Indiana manufacturers. Another 17 percent of our waste could be turned into valuable compost, according to the study.

The Indiana Recycling Coalition wants to recover these resources – not only for the sake of the environment, but also for the sake of delivering more jobs to Indiana residents. It won’t take a huge change to make a meaningful difference in the state’s workforce. If Indiana captured just 25 percent of what it disposes of as waste today, we could see the creation of 10,000 new jobs.

For context, consider this: In 2012, according to the Indiana Economic Development Commission, all of the state’s industries combined to create fewer than 30,000 new jobs. By diverting just 25 percent more waste, the state could supply the raw materials for the creation of one-third of that total from one industry alone.

Where would those jobs come from? From the collection, sorting and processing of recyclable and compostable materials, a process that has been shown to create, on average, 10 times the number of jobs required to collect, landfill and incinerate discarded waste.

“It’s a simple matter of economics,” said Carey Hamilton, executive director of the Indiana Recycling Coalition. “Indiana manufacturers want more recyclable materials because they save significantly on energy costs when they use recycled materials rather than raw materials. The resources are available right here in Indiana. And recycling creates more jobs.”

The problem? Indiana lacks the public policy that will transform its waste management system into a resource recovery system – making recycling accessible and convenient for Hoosiers.

According to the study, there is economic value in the materials commonly thrown away (e.g. paper, glass, plastics, metals, compostables and durable goods), and any recyclable materials are a significant economic commodity that can create a strong workforce and stimulate job growth.

Hamilton said the Indiana Recycling Coalition plans to work with the Legislature to reinstate the existing recycling grant fund as well as to pursue policies that support recycling infrastructure and education as a means to increase recycling.

“Indiana has a relatively low recycling rate and a relatively strong in-state demand from our commodity manufacturing sector,” said Hamilton. “If we don’t take advantage of this, we’re virtually burying jobs in landfills.”

The study identified 77 manufacturers in Indiana that use recycled feedstock. These manufacturers are located in all corners of the state.

The study was unveiled today at Strategic Materials’ glass recycling plant on the south side of Indianapolis. The largest glass recycler in North America, Strategic Materials converts scrap materials into valuable recyclable products, allowing customers to become more efficient by saving raw materials and energy while reducing air emissions. The glass is used to create a wide range of products, including Indiana-produced fiberglass insulation and food & beverage containers, as well as reflective materials and more.

President and COO Curtis Bucey said Strategic Materials is more likely to locate and expand in locations where there’s a large supply of recycled glass. After all, it makes sense to locate production facilities as close as possible to raw materials.

“We’ve already found Indiana to be a great place to do business, and the demand for our products is much larger than the current supply,” Bucey said. “We could sell over 20 times the amount of glass we currently collect from Indiana, and if more in-state recycled glass were available from sources, SMI would seriously consider expanding this operation and/or opening additional facilities in Indiana.”

Pratt Industries – one of the largest corrugated packaging companies in the country with 4,400 employees in 20 states – is building a \$260 million paper recycling mill next to its box plant in Valparaiso. The new mill will convert old corrugated boxes, mixed paper, and other grades of recovered paper from all of the country for use at the newly constructed paper mill. Pratt plans to hire additional employees, eventually bringing its total workforce in Indiana to 455, which is 135 more than today.

“We support increased paper recovery from Indiana’s waste stream because we believe it’s best for the economy, the environment, and consumers,” said Myles Cohen, president of Pratt Recycling, a division of Pratt Industries. “We’ve already demonstrated our desire to do business in Indiana, and we’d certainly welcome the resources and opportunities to continue to expand our business here, while also contributing to Indiana’s landfill diversion goal.”

The study is available at <http://www.indianarecycling.org/about-irc/advocacy/2013-recycling-job-study/>.

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