



Earth911 – Aerosol Can Recycling

Must an aerosol can be empty to be recycled?

Generally speaking, yes, but “empty” to a consumer is different than “empty” to a recycler. If the contents of a can have been used up and it no longer sprays, the can can usually be deposited to any recycler that’s known to handle the cans, which are usually made of steel or aluminum. If there are still contents within the can, it should be **properly processed** by a household hazardous waste-processing facility. Even “empty” cans contain remnants and should never be punctured by anyone other than a certified recycler.

Do the contents of an aerosol can matter for recycling?

Not really. Empty aerosol cans are usually **not classified as hazardous waste** due solely to the substances they once contained, but rather because their contents are highly pressurized and capable of explosion if heated or otherwise mishandled. Never, ever puncture aerosol cans.

Are aerosol cans bad for the environment?

The U.S. banned the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), the compounds that most publicly linked aerosol can use to ozone layer damage, in 1978. Still, critics of the cans cite the possible damaging effects of hydrocarbons and compressed gases linked to climate change, and of VOCs’ contribution to smog.

Aerosol industry insiders point to the cans’ long product shelf-life, minimum spillage and relative ease of recyclability **as waste-reducing aspects**.

Do the lid and spray nozzle need to be removed from aerosol cans for recycling?

Lids are usually made of plastic and separate from the steel or aluminum can and can be removed before recycling. Do not remove the spray nozzle from an aerosol can, as even when the inside contents have been spent, cans are pressurized and can pose a danger if punctured.

**Recycle all aerosol cans at the Lorain county
Collection Center, 540 S. Abbe Rd. along with all
your other household hazardous waste.**