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[Recycling: A Look At New York City](#)

New York City, in just its five boroughs, has a population of over 8 million and in an area smaller than most states; you can just imagine how much waste is created on a daily basis. Recycling in New York City is mandatory and has been since July 1989. Before that date, starting in 1986, recycling was voluntary and as it began to catch on, recycling-educating materials from pamphlets, decals to TV and newspaper advertisements flooded the area up until 1997, when all five boroughs and all 59 districts were recycling all of the same materials. By this time an impact was being made in recycling waste right up until the events of September 11th, 2001. After the 9/11 tragedy forced budget cuts were implemented for the Department of Sanitation.

It's hard to believe that a city as populated as New York City has always been, that it took until 1881 before the first sanitation collection agency was formed. The agency was formed in an effort to clean up the city's littered streets and to stop the general population from disposing of their waste directly into the Atlantic Ocean. In 1881, the Department of Street Cleaning was formed and the New York City Police Department was no longer responsible for the waste problems. It is basically the same department today with the exception of a 1933 name change into the Department of Sanitation.

Prior to the formation of the Department of Sanitation, more than three quarters of all waste from the city of New York was simply dumped into the ocean. Just a decade later, in 1895, the very first recycling plan was implemented by Commissioner George Waring in which his plan separated household waste into three categories; there was food waste, rubbish and ash.

The information about Recycling presented here will do one of two things: either it will reinforce what you know about Recycling or it will teach you something new. Both are good outcomes.

The only category of the three that could not be re-used was ash, and it and whatever materials came from the rubbish category that could not be re-used were put into landfills. Food waste, which went through a process of being steamed, they found, could be turned into fertilizer and grease materials that were used to produce soap. The category of rubbish was collected and re-used however possible and only as a last resort, ended up in the landfills.

New York City had filled to capacity six landfills and needed to keep them closed from 1965 to 1991, which left open only one active landfill; Fresh Kills in Staten Island, which remained the only trash-accepting landfill until it closed for good in 2001.

Other than the temporary end of recycling due to World War I in 1918, New York City has kept a steady flow of recycling going for more than a hundred years and at one time ran twenty two incinerators and eighty nine landfills.

Recycling continues today in New York City as a mandatory action for all residents, schools, institutions, agencies and all commercial businesses.

Is there really any information about Recycling that is nonessential? We all see things from different angles, so something relatively insignificant to one may be crucial to another.

About the Author

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