

## RECYCLE - BACKGROUND INFORMATION

# Markets (cont.)

Scrap metal dealers, not recycling companies, usually collect these materials. The two basic methods of recovering metals are: remelt applications or chemical processing. Remelt techniques are used to retrieve iron. Copper is recovered chemically, in much the same manner as tin.

**Plastics** (See HANDOUT: Plastic Process Flow Chart D56)

Like paper, plastics come in many different forms. The resins used in making the plastic, distinguish one type from another, but most of the material is processed in the same manner.

At a recycling facility, empty plastic products are normally separated and inspected. Some operations leave the resins mixed, while others remove specific plastics. Although these processes can be automated, people are generally used to correct mistakes made by the machines.

It is difficult to remove contaminants due to the small openings found on many plastic products. By shredding the plastic first, the recyclable material is easier to wash. Further separation can occur during the cleaning stage. Lighter resins can be removed as they float near the surface of the washing solution. Clean plastic flakes are dried then ground finer. Finally, the plastic is extruded into new products or into pellets.

Recycled plastic becomes insulation for coats, sleeping bags and similar applications. Some oil jugs are made from re-manufactured High Density Polyethylene (H.D.P.E). Bleach bottles, brush bristles, carpet backing, rope, trays and automobile bumpers all can be made from recycled plastic. Used food and beverage containers are not converted to new versions of the same product because minute traces of contaminants may be persistent in recycled plastic. For safety reasons, the plastic used to hold what we drink and eat is always new.

Like so many other myths, the one claiming there are no markets for recyclable materials has been blown out of proportion. Myths are normally based on some truth but as the story is repeated, the tale becomes more and more extravagant. The truth about markets is; they are available.

