

Recycled Materials Definitions

There is confusion in the marketplace about the terminology used to define the different types of recycled materials. To help clear up the confusion, Continental Products received permission from ASTM International to share their definitions.¹

ASTM International is a trusted source for technical standards for materials, products, systems, and services. Known for their high technical quality and market relevancy, ASTM International's standards are recognized around the world.

In its "Standard Guide for Waste Reduction, Resource Recovery, and Use of Recycled Polymeric Materials and Products" (D7209-06), they provide the following definitions:

PLASTICS RECYCLING The process by which plastic materials or products that would otherwise become solid waste are collected, processed, and returned to use in plastic products that have fulfilled their intended purpose or can no longer be used; this includes material returned from within the distribution chain.

POST-CONSUMER PLASTICS MATERIAL Plastics material generated by the end users of products that has fulfilled its intended purpose or can no longer be used, this includes material returned from within the distribution chain.

ASTM Discussion—Post-consumer material is part of the broader category of recovered material. Post-consumer plastics may come from households or commercial, industrial, and institutional facilities in their role as end users of a product. Some entities use the term "post-commercial" to identify substantial amounts of similar or identical post-commercial material from a nonhousehold source. Another term for post-consumer plastic is "post-consumer resin."

PRE-CONSUMER PLASTICS MATERIAL Plastics material that has been diverted from the waste stream before reaching the consumer, but excluding reutilization of material such as re-work, re-grind, or scrap generated in the process and capable of being reclaimed within the same process.

RE-GRIND Shredded or granulated recovered plastics material reclaimed by shredding and granulating sprues and runners for use in houses.

ASTM Discussion—The term re-grind is frequently used to describe plastics materials in the form of scrap generated in a plastics processing operation and used in-house.

MISUSE/DECEPTIVE LABELING Recycled/reclaimed materials shall be properly labeled and identified. The product shall identify the percentage and source, that is, as to post-consumer or pre-consumer categories or both. Improper identification of re-grind or re-work material is illegal in some jurisdictions.

The Federal Trade Commission also addresses pre-consumer recycled materials. According to the FTC's "Green Guides": Pre-consumer recycled material is a waste product of a manufacturing process, diverted from the solid waste stream and not normally reused by industry during the original manufacturing process. To make an appropriate pre-consumer recycled content claim, you must be able to substantiate that the pre-consumer material would otherwise have gone into the solid waste stream.

In contrast, by-products of a manufacturing process that normally are reused within the process and usually don't enter the waste stream are considered industrial scrap and don't count toward recycled content.

Eco-Cycle newspaper bags are the most environmentally responsible bags available because they keep recyclable plastic in the recycling loop and out of the landfill. They contain recycled materials AND are recyclable into other products.

If another bag manufacturer claims their bags contain recycled materials, ask them for proof that they meet the ASTM and FTC definitions.

ECO-CYCLE
BY CONTINENTAL

For more information about Eco-Cycle bags

1-800-325-0216

www.continentalproducts.com

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