Polystyrene

Somerset County does not collect polystyrene materials because they are difficult to collect and store due to its bulk. To assist residents who want to dispose of polystyrene products rather than throw them out with the trash, following are some options:

Packing Peanuts

Polystyrene packing peanuts can be taken to your local Mail Boxes Etc., PostNet or UPS stores, where they will be reused in future packing shipments.

UPS stores also will accept Bubble Wrap for reuse in their deliveries as long as the bubbles have not been popped.

Packing Polystyrene Blocks (Expanded Polystyrene)

Polystyrene foam blocks, commonly used for the packaging of computers, laptops, kitchen appliances and televisions, can be taken to a specialist company – Foam Pack Industries - for recycling throughout New Jersey, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Foam Pack Industries is the only company offering this option at this time.

Foam Pack Industries accepts both foam packing peanuts and foam blocks used for the shipping of goods. Foam egg boxes and foam meat trays are NOT accepted. For details on exactly which types of polystyrene products are accepted, go to the Foam Pack Industries website at foampackindustries.com. Pieces of tape, stickers or labels from the polystyrene blocks must be removed before taking them to the recycling facility.

Foam Pack Industries is located at 72 Fadem Road, Springfield, NJ 07081 and can be reached at (973) 376-3700.

Tips On Keeping Polystyrene Out of the Waste Stream

Keep it as packing - Break down large lumps of polystyrene into smaller chunks and keep a bag handy for future use.

Residents of the United States can visit the Earth911 website - Earth911.org - and enter "polystyrene" and their location in the “Search” function at the top of the page to find locations to recycle various materials. The search results will provide listings of companies and organizations in your local area that will take polystyrene. Note: Be sure to enter "polystyrene" rather than "Styrofoam," as Styrofoam is a brand name, which is unlikely to return any results.

Mail Back Initiative - The Alliance of Foam Packaging Recyclers offers a mail-back program to residents of the United States whereby you send the polystyrene peanuts to them via the U.S. mail service. The cost of postage is involved, but this may prove more economical than carting it somewhere by car.
To learn more about what can be recycled in New Jersey and locations, visit www.recyclingnj.com/recycle/polystyrene.html.

Facts about Polystyrene and How to Reduce and Recycle

Polystyrene products are widely used as packing material to protect goods from damage while in transit. There are four main types of polystyrene packaging materials that are commonly used.

- **Styrofoam Products**: Styrofoam is a brand name commonly used to describe a particular type of polystyrene manufacturing process that is used to create polystyrene cups, foam fast food boxes and foam meat trays.
- **Polystyrene Packing Peanuts**: Used in the shipment of small items as box packing fill.
- **Expanded Polystyrene Blocks**: Used in the shipment of large equipment such as computers and household appliances.
- **Polystyrene Containers**: Some supermarket packaging is made from polystyrene, such as the small individual serving yogurt pots and some pre-packaged fruit or vegetable containers.

**Reduce**

Look for ways to reduce the amount of polystyrene waste that you generate. For example, using a reusable cup instead of the disposable polystyrene cups will stop some polystyrene from entering the waste stream.

Many delivery companies have switched to using sealed polyethylene pouches filled with air instead of polystyrene packing peanuts. These are much better for the environment than packing peanuts as they require significantly less plastic to manufacture and are much easier for the customer to recycle. The polyethylene bag can simply be pierced to let the air out, and then recycled with other plastic bags and polyethylene wraps. For more information about plastic bags, visit www.recyclingnj.com.

**Recycle**

Although the polystyrene used in meat trays and disposable cups cannot be recycled, the polystyrene used in shipping boxes to protect items inside can be readily recycled. Polystyrene meat trays are not accepted for recycling because they are contaminated by uncooked meat products; they must be disposed of in your general trash.