

# WHICH #6 PLASTIC ITEMS CAN BE RECYCLED?

## FOOD SERVICE

Take out containers (clamshells), **cups** WITHOUT PAPER LABELS, **bowls** that individual servings of beans, potato salad, slaw come in, and etc. They can be any color as long as they are



“clean, Clean, CLEAN!”

“Clean” means no remaining **FOOD, DRINK OR DIRT**. We don’t want to know what you’ve been eating!

Stained items are “clean” if they pass the “thumb test.” Rub your thumb over the stained area and if your thumb doesn’t look shiny afterward, it’s clean. If your thumb IS shiny, the item needs to be washed with soap and water. Some items may just need to be wiped with a napkin (ex. sandwich crumbs). Others may need soap & water (chips and dip, spaghetti, refried beans, etc.). Stained items are okay if they aren’t greasy/sticky.

We CAN’T put dirty foam in the densifier. It contaminates all other clean foam and makes it worthless. It also makes the densifier sticky which causes crumbled foam to clump together and jam the machine.

## PACKAGING FOAM



Packaging foam must have **all TAPE and PAPER LABELS REMOVED** before recycling. Some foam may have cardboard backing and other metal pieces that also need to be removed.

**Reminder: Foam packaging or food service products “break or snap in two” when bent. If foam bends, it’s #4 plastic, not the #6 polystyrene that can be recycled through our program.**

Foam Recycling in Central Oklahoma  
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### Media sources:

University Lutheran Church & Student Center –  
[www.ulcsc.org](http://www.ulcsc.org) “Green Team” webpage

Facebook: Search for the “Churches Caring for Creation” page for information, inspiration, collection and densifying events, and all things “green.”

## WHY FOAM IS BAD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT . . .

“Expanded Polystyrene (EPS),” the #6 in the recycle triangle found on plastic containers, and named “Styrofoam” by its inventor, the Dow Chemical Corporation, ***is a known carcinogen*** if eaten, burned in incinerators, or left to leach into the soil by placing it in landfills instead of being recycled. It will essentially remain crushed, dirty and broken 500 years from now; it doesn’t decompose.

“Foam” wreaks havoc on the environment. It's not biodegradable and therefore takes up a lot of space in landfills, which adds to the pollution problem. If littered, EPS foam breaks into smaller pieces that are more difficult to clean up. Another argument against EPS foam is that it's made from nonrenewable fossil fuels and synthetic chemicals, which also contribute to pollution. EPS foam often makes its way into waterways and can have disastrous effects on animals that may confuse it for food or nesting material.

In 2019, a coalition of local churches called “Churches Caring for Creation,” decided to work together to develop a program with the goal of safely recycling #6 plastic. This goal has spread to the public collection of foam in 6 central Oklahoma communities.

## WHERE CAN I RECYCLE FOAM WEEKDAYS?

A “Styro-Station” where foam can be dropped off for safe recycling is located at:

### University Lutheran Church & Student Center

914 Elm (1<sup>st</sup> block south of Lindsey)

Styro-Station is easily accessed off the church parking lot located on College, behind the church.

Hours: Mon. – Fri. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. A drop-off box is placed outside the door if the office is closed. Other collection times may be arranged, as needed.

Items to recycle include foodservice containers and packaging foam, but no packaging peanuts. Because foam must be “clean, Clean, CLEAN” to densify into solid plastic logs, all items brought to recycle **must be grease-free, food and drink-free, and have tape and paper labels removed**.

Recycle egg cartons whole. They are given to “Poultry Partners” who reuse them. We receive 400-500 cartons monthly which are reused rather than recycled.

## WHAT HAPPENS TO THE DENSIFIED FOAM LOGS?

The foam logs are placed on pallets and stored in a warehouse because plastic deteriorates when exposed to light. (Think about plastic outdoor furniture left out in the sun. It turns yellow and becomes brittle.)

A major national plastics recycler has expressed interest in securing our densified logs. They will sell and transport the foam to manufacturers who make new items from recycled #6 foam. Some of these items include dollar store picture frames, crown molding and decorative trim for motor homes and airplanes where keeping weight to a minimum is beneficial. Decking and wood-look picnic tables are also made of #6 foam.

It costs less to make new foam items from recycled foam than using virgin chemicals. Any proceeds from selling foam will be returned to the foam densifying program to pay for equipment, gasoline, repairs, and densifying supplies.

## WHERE ELSE CAN I RECYCLE FOAM?

The Pioneer Library System Public Libraries in six Central Oklahoma towns (Norman, Moore, Shawnee, Purcell, Blanchard and Newcastle) host collection & densifying events three times a year in their parking lots.

Additionally, community groups schedule dates for collection & densifying events at other locations. The events are on scheduled Saturdays from 10 – Noon. Contact any of these libraries or look on their “events” pages online for the complete schedule.

**(Saturdays from 10 – Noon, unless noted otherwise.)**

**This is only a partial listing.**

### 2024

- Jan. 6 -- Shawnee Public Library
- Jan. 13 -- Norman Public Library
- Jan. 27 -- Moore Public Library
- Feb. 10 -- Purcell Public Library
- Feb. 24 -- Noble – 1<sup>ST</sup> Baptist Church parking lot
- Mar. 23 -- City of Stillwater Recycling Festival
- May 4 -- Shawnee Public Library
- Oct. 5 -- Shawnee Public Library

