

Punt those pizza boxes out of your recycle bins

If you're planning a pizza-filled Super Bowl party, think twice before putting those pizza boxes into your recycling bins. We've all been trained that paper and cardboard are recyclable. However, what makes your pizza delicious also reduces the recyclability of the boxes in which they were delivered.

Boxes soaked with food and grease are not recyclable in your curbside bins/totes anywhere in Lake, Porter or LaPorte Counties in Northwest Indiana. Therefore, the guidelines for recycling say "NO PIZZA BOXES" at all. In fact, please don't place any paper products contaminated with food and grease in your curbside recycling or in the drop-off boxes sponsored by your solid waste management district.



When paper products are recycled, they are mixed with water and turned into a slurry. Grease and water don't mix, so oil residues from greasy paper products rise to the top of the slurry and cannot be separated from the paper fibers, causing problems with the fibers binding.

This is different for plastics, metals and glass, as those materials are recycled using a heat process. You don't even have to rinse those materials if you don't want to, making recycling a snap!

Remember, contamination is a costly problem with recycling. Some estimates put the costs of irresponsible contamination in the neighborhood of \$700 million per year industrywide.

If the materials recovery facility (MRF), or the facility where your recyclables go, unknowingly accepts and bales contaminated materials and sells them to a company that will make new products out of them, that company may either stop buying the materials for fear of contamination or offer less for them. If the MRF can't get rid of the paper or doesn't make a profit on it, the cost of recycling will ultimately go up for consumers!

That's why we need to take some steps to ensure we are placing the right materials in our curbside bins/totes.

If you absolutely have a problem throwing your pizza boxes in the trash, you can take an extra step and cut or rip off the pieces of the boxes that are not soaked with grease and place those parts in your curbside bins.

If taking that step is a chore, Metro Recycling will gladly accept your greasy pizza boxes. Visit www.wheredoirecycle.com for locations and hours.

Some resources say you can compost pizza boxes with small amounts of residue. Large amounts of grease and food contamination in your compost pile can attract rodents and cause odors.