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Carpet Recycling Group Expanding Carpet Recycling in Illinois

November 1, 2013, Glenview, IL - According to a study conducted by Carpet America Recovery Effort (CARE), an estimated 3,540 million pounds of carpet were discarded in the United States in 2012, and only about 10% was diverted from the landfill.

Based on CARE's estimate of 14 pounds of carpet per person per year, and an Illinois population of 12.8 million, we can estimate that the amount of carpet discarded annually in Illinois is around 180 million pounds. But based on the 2009 *Illinois Commodity/Waste Generation and Characterization Study**, it could actually be as high as 560 million pounds. According to that same study, carpet and padding are 2% of what is landfilled in Illinois.

In response to this resource recovery issue, the Illinois Carpet Recycling Working Group (CRWG) was formed. The CRWG is dedicated to advancing carpet recycling in Illinois, and is currently working to increase public drop-off collection locations for carpet and padding in the greater Chicago area. To date there are a total of 13 public carpet recycling drop-off locations, and several one-day recycling events in Kane and Will Counties have included carpet recycling. The Village of Oak Park is currently offering a pilot curbside carpet recycling program.

“Over 15,000 pounds of carpet were collected in 2 recent Kane County recycling events,” reports Jennifer Jarland, Recycling Coordinator for Kane County, and co-chair of CRWG. “Residents really appreciate being able to recycle their spent carpet instead of sending it to a landfill.” A large quantity of old carpet sits rolled in basements, sheds, and garages, and is pulled out of houses everyday. As an alternative to sending it to a landfill, resource conscious residents and business owners are looking for a responsible option for disposal. The CRWG is working with collectors and processors to increase the convenience and infrastructure for recycling carpet and carpet padding, in order to give citizens an affordable and effective solution.

Carpet and padding are made of a variety of materials, a great portion of which are recyclable and some of which are developing markets. “Carpet is made from different types of plastics, which can make it difficult at times to process the material and find the right buyers, however everyday new exciting applications arise for these recycled materials,” states Eugene Knaus of Go Green Carpet Recycling, a company that collects and pre-processes carpet for recycling. Recovering these valuable resources, and diverting them from landfills into reuse or remanufacturing is the main goal of the emerging carpet recycling movement across the U.S.

Carpet must first be collected and sorted by material type such as nylon, polypropylene or PET. The material is then sent to a processor that shears off the face fiber. The material is melted into pellets or sold as fluff and sent to manufacturers that can make new plastic products. Often, chemicals are added to the process for durability, rigidity, sun exposure or coloring.

Carpet padding can be ground up and made into new padding or furniture cushions. Carpet fibers can be made into a variety of products such as new carpet, office furniture, decking, automobile parts, erosion control systems and other consumer goods.

“Great progress has been made on closing the loop in carpet manufacturing over the past 10 years,” says Eric Nelson, Vice President of Strategic Alliances of Interface Flooring. “Interface has been slowly progressing in this area for some time, and in 2012, the recycled-content and bio-based portion of our raw material stream was up to 49% globally. Not only is closing the loop in manufacturing the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do. It enables us to lessen the effects of volatile petroleum prices that drastically spike oil based raw materials. Our products are now made to be recycled and come right back into this technical loop.”

Carpet and padding drop-off locations, details and recycling resources can be found at swanaindinois.org.

**source: <http://www2.illinois.gov/gov/green/Documents/Waste%20Study.pdf>*

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About [CRWG](#):

The Illinois Carpet Recycling Working Group (CRWG) is comprised of solid waste agencies, counties, and carpet collectors, processors, retailers, installers, manufacturers and construction and demolition facilities. The Group is dedicated to advancing carpet recycling in Illinois through infrastructure building, partner collaboration, program implementation, policy, and education and outreach efforts.

About [SWANA Land of Lincoln Chapter](#)

It is SWANA's mission to advance the practice of environmentally and economically sound management of municipal solid waste in North America. For over 40 years, SWANA has been the leading professional association in the solid waste field, serving over 8,000 members throughout North America, and thousands more with conferences, certifications, publications, and technical training courses. SWANA Land of Lincoln membership includes local and state government officials; engineering and planning consultants; owners and operators of solid waste facilities and waste and recycling haulers.

About [CARE](#)

The mission of CARE is to advance market-based solutions that increase landfill diversion and recycling of post-consumer carpet, encourage design for recyclability and meet meaningful goals as approved by the CARE Board of Directors. CARE has facilitated the recovery, reclamation, and recycling of 1.6 billion pounds of post-consumer carpet since its founding in 2002.