

Mattress recycling reaches milestone in California

November 27, 2023



More than 10 million mattresses have been recycled in California since the Mattress Recycling Council (MRC) launched the Bye Bye Mattress program in the state. If laid end-to-end, that is enough mattresses to stretch from California's coastline to the middle of the Indian Ocean. As a result, recyclers have diverted more than 380 million pounds of steel, foam, fiber and wood from landfills and made them available for use in new products like carpet padding, construction rebar and mulch.

"By reducing the demand to use virgin materials in other products, mattress recycling is contributing to California's other important environmental goals – saving water, conserving energy and preventing greenhouse gas emissions," said Mike O'Donnell, MRC's Chief Operating Officer. "We have the data to prove it too."

"A recent analysis of our California program's environmental footprint from collection to recycling shows that each mattress recycled saves 500 gallons of water, conserves enough energy to power a house for three days and reduces greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to driving 60 fewer miles."

MRC's Bye Bye Mattress is a statewide network of collection sites and events serving urban and rural communities across California and made possible through collaborations with solid waste providers and

nonprofit organizations. A growing number of waste haulers collecting bulky items at the curb are also recycling mattresses through the program.

Mattresses are transported from participating collection locations to regional recyclers, where they are dismantled into their different component parts. Mattress retailers, hotels, dormitories, nursing homes, military bases and other types of businesses are also working with MRC to have their old mattresses picked-up and recycled by the program.

“We are proud of what we have accomplished in California, but we know there are opportunities for the program to innovate and evolve. This is why we are supporting the industry’s broader efforts to encourage circular design and sustainability initiatives.” said O’Donnell.

MRC undertakes research to improve collection, transportation and recycling processes. This includes providing research firms and educational institutions up to \$100,000 in funding for projects aimed at discovering new uses for mattress materials.

To date, MRC has awarded funds to over 30 projects and is seeing some promising outcomes.

“One day, recycled mattress materials may help EV batteries hold longer charges, or be used to make shoe soles, or clean-up oil spills,” said O’Donnell. “We need innovators to create new uses for polyurethane foam, quilt panels, cotton and mixed fibers.”

In addition to Bye Bye Mattress, MRC’s other California activities include offering mattress manufacturing facilities in the state an environmental certification program known as the Sleep Products Sustainability Program (SP2), which encourages conservation and resource efficiency. Since launching in 2019, four facilities have received the certification.

Other important work that MRC funds helps communities mitigate the causes of illegal dumping. For more than seven years, MRC has dedicated \$1 million or more to collecting data about abandoned mattresses, engaging with local leaders in especially hard-hit communities, conducting education and outreach about mattress recycling and disposal options, and researching attitudes and other factors that predict illegal dumping behavior.

“All of these accomplishments are possible because MRC has the support of the mattress industry, mattress retailers, the solid waste industry and state agencies that provide oversight and guidance for our programs,” said O’Donnell. “We are also grateful to the international community of mattress recyclers and product stewardship organizations for sharing their best practices, collaborating on research projects and their commitment to sustainability.”

About the Mattress Recycling Council

The Mattress Recycling Council (MRC) is a nonprofit organization that operates recycling programs in states that have passed mattress recycling laws: California, Connecticut and Rhode Island. MRC was founded by the bedding industry and recycles nearly 2 million mattresses each year. To inform residents and businesses

about the availability and importance of mattress recycling, MRC created a public education campaign branded Bye Bye Mattress. For more information about MRC, go to MattressRecyclingCouncil.org. To learn how to recycle your mattress or to find a collection location or event near you, visit ByeByeMattress.com.

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