The Life Cycle of Secondhand Clothing



www.weardonaterecycle.org

What happens to your donated or recycled used clothing?

On average, each American donates or recycles 12 pounds of apparel, footwear, and household textiles. Here's what happens next...

Once a consumer determines that their clothing, shoes, handbags, or household textiles have reached the end of their useful life, materials are donated to a charity or should be recycled at a municipal recycling center as a final alternative to the landfill



Left with billions of pounds, charities resell their salvage to recyclers which raises significant revenue and is an alternative to the landfill. Secondhand clothing recyclers sort and separate these materials into three general classifications:

10-20%

Charities sell donated used clothing at their thrift locations earning revenue for their

80%



45%

REUSED AND REPURPOSED

Majority exported as secondhand clothing.



30%

RECYCLED AND CONVERTED

Reclaimed wiping rags are used in various ways as industrial and residential absorbents.



20% RECYCLED INTO FIBER

Post-consumer fiber is used to make home insulation, carpet padding, and raw material for the automotive industry.



Only 5% ends up as waste.

Did you know?

Worn or torn, all dry clothing, shoes, and textiles can be donated or recycled. Thrift Industry employs nearly 100,000 workers in the U.S. with over \$1 billionin wages paid. In addition, private sector recyclers create an additional 15,000 to 20,000 jobs nationally.2

Most private sector recyclers are small businesses with fewer than 500 employees. Every 1,000 lbs donated and recycled generates two man days of labor. Primary and secondary recyclers account for annual gross sales in excess of \$700 million.3

Charities and private sector combined handle 3.8 billion pounds annually.4 These tremendous volumes are recycled and processed due to a highly efficient industry. Your secondhand clothing goes through this entire process in just 30-60 days.5



The textile recycling process follows the conventional recycling maxim of

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!

SOURCES ** EPA 2009 FEDERAL MSW waste study: 3.8 billion lbs recovered divided by 2010 US Census Population 310 million

³ "Textile Recycling in the U.S." Report submitted to SMART by Dr. Jana Hawley Ph.D. Univ. of Missouri. 2009.

4 EPA 2009 Federal MSW waste study

5 CTR estimate.