

Good morning! Thank you for joining us today to find out more about an important topic — that is, Recycling Right.

Year Towards Zero Waste

2 Why is this important? Some of you would be aware that the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources (MEWR) has made 2019 Singapore's Year Towards Zero Waste. We did this to focus everyone's attention on the fact that we are wasting a lot of precious resources each year.

3 The amount of waste disposed of in Singapore has jumped seven-fold over the past 40 years. Although we incinerate our waste to conserve space, Semakau Landfill, our only landfill, will be filled up by 2035 if we continue to waste resources at the current rate. Incineration also takes energy and generates carbon emissions, which in turn contributes to climate change. To tackle this, we need everyone to make it a habit to practise the 3Rs of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle Right.

4 Last week, I launched the National Environment Agency's "Say YES to Waste Less" campaign to encourage Singaporeans to say yes to reusables, and reduce the use of disposables. Today, we will focus on the #RecycleRight [*pronounced as: Re-cycle Right*] movement.

Why Recycle Right

5 According to a survey my ministry conducted earlier this year, about 60 per cent of Singaporean households are recycling regularly. This is very encouraging and I commend those of you who are doing your part for the environment.

6 However, it is worrying that about 70 per cent of those surveyed thought that soiled paper food packaging is recyclable. It is not! When food and liquids get into the blue recycling bin, they contaminate other recyclables in the blue bin, which then have to be trashed rather than recycled. Today, the contamination rate of blue recycling bins is high, at 40 per cent. We can do better than this and we must, if we aim to reduce our waste.

7 Recycling right enables us to turn our trash into treasure, and reuse it for as long as possible. This is what we call a circular economy approach. One company that has demonstrated the value of recycling is Miniwiz. The company has been innovative in turning waste materials into beautiful products. I am very happy that they have brought one of their innovations – their mini Trashpresso [*pronounced as: Trash-press-so*] – here this weekend. This is the first time the mini Trashpresso is on public display in Singapore. This portable recycling plant is able to convert plastic waste into useful end products through a three-step process of size reduction, purification and reshaping. For instance, when plastic shreds derived from used bottle caps are placed into the Trashpresso, they are transformed into beautiful coasters. This gives the plastic used for the bottle caps a second lease of life. I hope looking at the Trashpresso and the beautiful coasters it produces, will give you a real sense of the value of recycling, and inspire you to recycle more and recycle right.

Three Simple Facts to Remember

8 Recycling right does not take a lot of time and effort. In fact, our survey found that Singaporeans who recycle regularly say they do it because it is convenient, and they do not want to be wasteful. There are just three simple things to remember.

9 **First, read the labels on the blue recycling bins** to find out what recyclables you can put in. You might think that toys, clothes and shoes can be placed in the blue bin. Actually, these should be donated if they are in good condition. Otherwise, they should be thrown away.

10 **Second, make sure your recyclables are clean and dry, and free of food and liquids.** This means that if you want to recycle a milk container, you should give it a quick rinse before depositing it into the recycling bin. Any packaging with food or liquids will contaminate the other recyclables. This will waste the efforts of other Singaporeans who are doing their part for the environment.

11 **Third, you do not need to sort the materials that you put into the blue bins.** We practise a co-mingled recycling system in Singapore. The recyclables will be sorted centrally at our Material Recovery Facilities, or MRFs, after they are collected from the blue bins. This makes it more convenient for everyone since you do not need to sort the different types of recyclables and store them separately at home. All the recyclables can be placed together and deposited into the blue bin at any time. A co-mingled recycling system is also more efficient for our Public Waste Collectors who are responsible for collecting the recyclables from blue bins. They do not need to send separate trucks to collect the various recyclables, thus saving manpower and time.

Conclusion

12 Let me conclude. I hope that you will enjoy the exhibition and the activities brought to you by my ministry and National Geographic this weekend. National Geographic 2017 Nature Photographer of the Year Jayaprakash Bojan [*pronounced as: Ja-ya-pra-kash Boh-jan*] has shot a photo story which brings you behind the scenes of how recycling takes place in Singapore. Do visit the photo exhibition later to find out more.

13 Through this event, we hope you will learn more about the recycling process in Singapore and pick up a few tips on how to #RecycleRight, to share with your friends and family.

14 If we can all do our part to #RecycleRight, I am confident that we can make significant progress towards a zero waste nation. Let's work together to build a sustainable Singapore, for our future generations.

Thank you.

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