

# Small & Mid-sized Businesses



*Thank you for your interest in setting up a plastic film recycling program!*

Nearly every business, including small and mid-sized enterprises, buys or sells products that are wrapped in plastic film packaging. This plastic film is an efficient and lightweight way to protect goods from contamination and breakage during shipping.

## Why Recycle Film Plastic?

Small and mid-sized businesses care about smart waste disposal and sustainable recycling practices because it's

the right thing to do and it can affect their bottom lines. Even for small businesses like dentist offices, cleaning services, and small retailers, recycling plastic film can help reduce waste disposal costs by keeping the material out of garbage bins and dumpsters. And, recycling this valuable material will make you feel good about keeping it out of the landfill.

## What is Plastic Film?

Plastic film is thin polyethylene plastic used for wraps, packaging, and commercial/retail use bags. It is sometimes called stretch film or shrink film.

Most plastic film collected for recycling may carry either a #2 HDPE or #4 LDPE mark. Common commercial or industrial use examples include:

- **Consumer product packaging (bathroom tissue, paper towels, bulk item case wrap)**
- **Case, shrink, and pallet (stretch film) wraps**
- **Furniture and electronics wraps**
- **Industrial use film and bags designed to protect or transport merchandise**
- **Bubble wrap and air packets (shipping)**
- **Grocery, produce, newspaper, and retail bags**
- **Dry cleaning bags**



Keeping the film **CLEAN and DRY** is essential to recycling this material. Recyclers say that it is important to keep the following out of your recycling bins to protect the quality of your material:

- **Any material other than #2 or #4 plastic film (can be stiff and/or crinkly)**
- **Any plastic that tears like paper**
- **Degradable bags and film**
- **Rigid plastics—bottles, clamshells, buckets, etc.**
- **Tape, paper or other waste**
- **Food Waste**
- **Rigid foam or packing “peanuts”**

Typically, labels and permanent marker on films are okay to recycle as they will be removed in the recycling process.

*If you are not sure about a specific material, please check with your recycler before including any material in your recycling stream.*

*To learn more about identifying your scrap plastic film, visit the “Learn What’s Recyclable” page on [www.plasticfilmrecycling.org](http://www.plasticfilmrecycling.org)*

If you accept film from the public, please add your location to the Film Drop-Off Directory at [www.plasticfilmrecycling.org](http://www.plasticfilmrecycling.org)



## Recycling in Your Facility

Moore Recycling Associates, experts in establishing plastic recycling programs, considers these three options to be good fits for small and mid-sized businesses. There may other options available in your area that could work as well. The viability of any option for your business will depend on your location and the type of material you collect.

### OPTION A

**A hauler or recycler runs a collection route to several localized businesses to minimize freight costs while maximizing quantity.**

The hauler may also collect other materials (e.g., cardboard) at the same time as long as the material does not contaminate the film stream. Unlike many other scrap materials, film must be clean and dry to maintain its scrap value.

### OPTION B

**One central facility is a consolidation point ("consolidating facility") that receives film from neighboring businesses.**

It is recommended the consolidating facility have storage space for loose film until a pickup is made. This is a great option for retail centers in which the anchor store can accept film from neighboring businesses. This option may also work well for small offices that want to recycle their material—you can take it to a local participating retailer or other drop-off location for collection.

### OPTION C

**A hauler or recycler sets up collection containers for collecting loose film at several points around an industrial/business park.**

In this scenario, none of the participating businesses would be required to have a baler or significant storage space, but there would be labor costs related to time spent taking the film to the collection point.



Programs such as these are a collaborative effort. Communicating with your hauler or the consolidating facility is important to maintain material quality and to have a relationship that works for all parties involved. It is also important to ask questions about how to collect the material (bagged, in boxes, etc.), when to deliver it to a consolidating facility (e.g. avoid lunchtime at a supermarket), and where it should go to avoid interrupting facility operations.

If your business is interested in participating in programs such as these listed above, please contact [help@plasticfilmrecycling.org](mailto:help@plasticfilmrecycling.org) for more information and technical assistance.

## Keys to Starting a Recycling Program

Moore Recycling Associates recommends the following steps:

**1. Collecting samples of plastic film waste from around your store/office** will allow you to check for contaminants before you begin your program. For information on completing a plastic film audit, visit: [plasticfilmrecycling.org/tips](http://plasticfilmrecycling.org/tips).

**2. Consider how you will collect and where you will take the material.** Using the information from your waste audit to train employees will help maintain quality and will help keep contaminants out of your material. Designating a clean and dry storage location will help protect your material. Discuss with your hauler/recycler or the consolidating facility how to store and/or deliver the material. Using signage on bins that clearly displays what materials can be recycled will help remind employees of what to put in the bin. If you have drop-off bins for customers to use, making sure your employees can answer customers' questions will help keep the bins free of contaminants.



Download free signage on [plasticfilmrecycling.org](http://plasticfilmrecycling.org)

**3. Placing collection bins or racks in locations where most of the plastic film is routinely generated** will help increase participation.

For many retailers, this would be at the entrance(s) for customers to bring back bags and film AND in the back of the store for collecting your store's material. For convenience, place recycling bins near trash bins to make it as easy to recycle as to discard the material. Recyclers state that is important to use collection bags made of a resin that can be recycled along with the film being collected – e.g. HDPE or LDPE.

**4. Designating an employee(s) to coordinate film collection throughout your business/office** will help improve your program efficiency and ultimately the quality of material. He or she will be in charge of collecting bags from bins, doing spot checks for contamination, and storing and/or delivering the material to the consolidation point.

**5. Maintain communication with your recycler/hauler** or consolidating facility to help meet quality requirements.

**6. Keep employees informed** on how the recycling program is going to keep them motivated.

For additional information, including how to find haulers and/or markets for your film, signage and film identification, please visit [www.plasticfilmrecycling.org](http://www.plasticfilmrecycling.org). For personal assistance, please call 888-753-7485 ext. 33 or email [help@plasticfilmrecycling.org](mailto:help@plasticfilmrecycling.org).



Flexible Film  
Recycling Group

This information is being provided by the FFRG, leading the nation's efforts to dramatically increase the recycling of polyethylene (PE) film.