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MATTRESS RECYCLING CREATES JOBS, REDUCES WASTE AND SAVES MONEY

National industry review reports most promising opportunities

EUGENE, Oregon — States that have passed laws requiring better stewardship of mattress recycling have created hundreds of new jobs, reduced landfill waste and saved millions of dollars in disposal costs, reports a national review of mattress recycling. The [report](#), authored by [Cascade Alliance](#), a national leader in mattress recycling, offers other states a roadmap to achieve similar economic, environmental and community benefits that recycling and reuse programs provide.

Since these policies took effect in 2015, the three states that passed these laws—California, Connecticut and Rhode Island—have:

- created more than 200 jobs,
- recycled one million mattresses,
- saved roughly 11 million cubic feet of landfill space, and
- though early in the program, Connecticut’s Department of Energy and Environmental Protection reports that Connecticut has saved municipalities [\\$1.5 million](#) in disposal costs since the law took effect in the state.

In California and Connecticut, Cascade Alliance mattress recycling facilities process units collected by the Mattress Recycling Council’s Bye Bye Mattress Program. Through Bye Bye Mattress, MRC collects units from the public at various no-cost drop-off locations and assists businesses and institutions with collecting and transporting mattresses to recyclers.

Cascade Alliance operates additional facilities in Massachusetts and Florida. These states do not have a stewardship law, but many retailers and landfill operators value recycling enough to pay for it.

Collectively, Cascade Alliance’s facilities recycle nearly 90 percent of a mattress, which saves 23 cubic feet of landfill space per unit. This national network of nonprofits diverts waste to create jobs for people who face barriers to work.

“It’s clear that recycling and reuse programs are better for the economy and better for the environment,” says Cascade Alliance Executive Director Terry McDonald. “Cascade Alliance members employ individuals who face barriers to finding employment, which leads to healthier, more stable families and communities.”

In response to the growing demand for more affordable and economically stimulating options, eight other states are also considering mattress recycling options, and private mattress manufacturers and retailers are initiating their own recycling programs.

Americans dispose of an estimated 20 million mattresses and box springs every year, and the vast majority end up in landfills or incinerators. Bulky mattresses are problematic for landfills: They take up a lot of space and create flammable air pockets, and the box springs get tangled in bulldozers, often damaging them. Mattresses contain non-biodegradable synthetic foam and fibers, plus flame retardant chemicals, which can leach into drinking water. That's why municipalities and private waste haulers generally charge extra for disposing of a mattress.

Mattress owners have even illegally dumped mattresses to avoid this cost.

Disposing or incinerating mattresses limits job creation, too. The Institute for Local Self Reliance [reports](#) that for every 10,000 tons of materials incinerated, one job is created. But for every 10,000 tons of materials processed for recycling and composting, five to 10 jobs are created. For mattresses specifically, the Cascade Alliance reports that the job creation benefits are even higher. For every 10,000 tons of mattresses diverted, 40 to 50 jobs are created.

Recycling Programs Drive Economic and Environmental Impact

With more demand from the mattress industry and a growing public interest in responsible product stewardship, including those laws already in place in California, Connecticut and Rhode Island, there is more urgency for cities and manufacturers to turn to reliable and affordable recycling and reuse programs like Cascade Alliance.

Cascade Alliance's nine members across the U.S. turn materials into a stable revenue stream and a source of secure, quality jobs. The result is financial stability for nonprofits, a cleaner, more sustainable environment for all, and the opportunity for a healthier, more secure life for the most vulnerable communities.

Since inception in 2013, Cascade Alliance members have collectively:

- Recycled nearly 240,000 mattresses and box springs
- Saved communities \$481,465 in avoided trash bills
- Recovered 15 million pounds of materials from the waste stream
- Created 103 full-time, life-stabilizing jobs for people with barriers
- 15 Materials management businesses launched or strengthened
- Generated more than \$10 million in revenue for member organizations
- Contributed to a reduction in greenhouse gases estimated at well over 14,000 tons

About Cascade Alliance

The Cascade Alliance is a national network of nine nonprofits diverting waste to create jobs for people who face barriers to work. Network members turn discarded mattresses, books, clothing,

glass and other items into a stable revenue stream and source of secure, quality jobs. The result is financial stability for nonprofits, a cleaner, more sustainable environment for all, and the opportunity for a healthier, more secure life for the most vulnerable communities. Organizations who join the Cascade Alliance demonstrate a commitment to helping create jobs that lead to better health, typically through access to health insurance or other health services. The Cascade Alliance is managed by the [St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County](#) and supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.