



Myth Busting: Waste

MYTH: After going to the landfill, waste doesn't affect the climate or our environment.

FACT: Although we may not see our trash again after we throw it away, the impacts of our waste are long-lasting. When waste decomposes in a landfill, it produces methane, a greenhouse gas that is more potent and stays in the atmosphere longer than carbon dioxide. **In Clark County, we send enough waste to the landfill every year to fill Allegiant Stadium more than 30 times over.**

Downstream emissions from solid waste disposal account for 12.5% of all County-wide greenhouse gas emissions. Output from landfills doesn't only increase our emissions, it can also affect air and water quality, posing risk to the health of our community and environment.

*C40, [Consumption Based Emissions of C40 Cities](#), 2018.
Southern Nevada Health District, [2019 Clark County Recycling Report](#), 2019.*

MYTH: Food and organic waste doesn't contribute to climate change.

FACT: All waste – including organic materials – that is sent to landfills creates methane emissions. In fact, **food waste is the #1 source of waste in the country**, with 24% of landfill waste in the United States being comprised of food. When food, paper, and plastic are thrown away instead of being composted or recycled, our landfills fill up faster and we lose the opportunity to utilize that waste as nutrient-rich soil or recycled material. Minding consumption and utilizing proper waste disposal techniques keeps these materials out of the landfill and works towards a cleaner, more resilient community.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, [From Farm to Kitchen: The Environmental Impacts of U.S. Food Waste](#), 2021.

MYTH: Everything I put into my recycling bin is made into something new.

FACT: While proper recycling habits are important to limit landfill waste and encourage reuse, there are a variety of factors that limit how well materials can be recycled. Plastic waste is particularly harmful for the environment and has the lowest recycling rate among recycling materials: **only 9% of plastics that have ever been produced have actually been recycled.**

Clark County is home to both the largest recycling plant in North America as well as the first single-source facility for plastics recycling in the nation. Proper recycling practice is important to achieving environmental goals, but **the most important step to address waste in Clark County is reducing our waste overall.** That means eliminating unnecessary production and consumption, reducing packaging, and increasing the reuse of items. At home, waste reduction may look like swapping single-use items for reusable alternatives, limiting unnecessary purchases, or setting up a home compost system.

*U.S. EPA, ["Plastics: Material-Specific Data"](#), 2024.
Republic Services, ["Republic Services Polymer Center Opens. Promoting Bottle-to-Bottle Plastics Circularity"](#)*