

just the facts



Aluminum

E Greater
Vancouver
Regional
District
4330 Kingsway,
Burnaby, B.C.
V5H 4G8

Demand-Side Management
Telephones:
(604) 432-6375
Fax:
(604) 426-6811
Web-site:
www.gvrd.bc.ca

WHAT IS IT?

Aluminum is the most abundant metallic element and makes up approximately eight per cent of the planet's crust. It occurs naturally as bauxite and is smelted. The most active aluminum producing countries are Canada, the United States and Russia. Aluminum is a good conductor of electricity, is lightweight, corrosion-resistant and very strong. Aluminum is most commonly used for beverage containers.

WHERE CAN YOU RECYCLE ALUMINUM?

Beverage cans are recycled when returned for deposit refund. The refund system in British Columbia ensures manufacturers are responsible for the recycling of all beverage containers. Aluminum foil and pie plates are accepted at most depots, in some curbside programs and by private recyclers. Other aluminum items are accepted at some recycling depots or scrap metal dealers.

QUICK FACTS

325 million
beverage cans are
recycled in B.C.
annually.

70% of the
aluminum cans used
in North America are
recycled.

60 days is how
quickly a can is
recycled, made into a
new can, refilled and
returned to the
grocer's shelf.

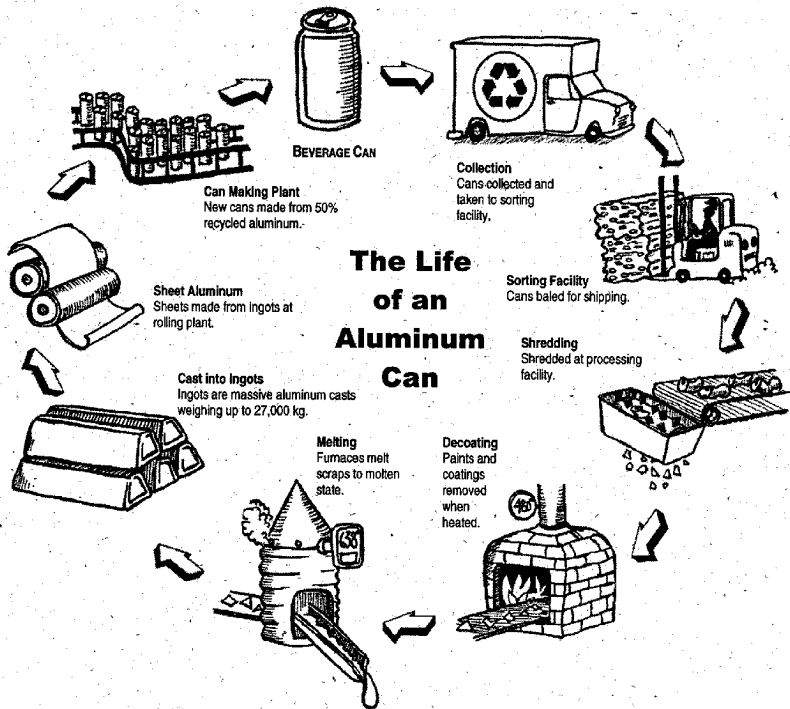
The 1900s
saw the beginning of
aluminum recycling.

One can
recycled saves enough
energy to operate a
television for 3 hours.

95% less
energy is required to
recycle a can than to
make it from bauxite,
the primary ore.

51.4% is the
average recycled
aluminum content in a
beverage can.

One can is so
strong, it can withstand
three times the
pressure of the
average automobile
tire.



just the facts



WHERE DO WE FIND ALUMINUM CANS?

Approximately four out of five beverage cans sold worldwide are made of aluminum. Ninety-nine per cent of soft drink cans and one hundred per cent of beer cans are made from aluminum.

WHAT ALUMINUM CAN BE RECYCLED?

Car Parts

- Engine blocks
- Cylinder heads
- Bumpers
- Transmission casings
- Water pumps

Building Materials

- House siding, windows & doors
- Awnings
- Gutters & downspouts
- Wire

Other Materials

- Baseball bats
- Pots and pans
- Kitchen foil wrap
- Pie plates
- Lawn furniture

WHAT CONTAMINATES ALUMINUM?

Dirt, moisture, plastic, glass and other metals are all contaminants in the aluminum recycling process. After the cans are shredded, magnets are used to separate steel and tin from the aluminum. Other contaminants are cleaned from the aluminum in furnaces that blast the aluminum at temperatures up to 480 Celsius.

WHERE IS IT PROCESSED?

Aluminum cans from all over North America are recycled in the world's largest recycling facility in Berea, Kentucky. This plant has the capacity to recycle six billion beverage cans every year – 220 every second.

WHAT ARE THE MARKETS?

Aluminum is one of the most recyclable materials available. It can be recycled without decreasing the quality of the material or losing any of its intrinsic strength. Recycling turns a can into a can into a can – a complete closed loop process. Aluminum cans are worth six to 20 times more than other recyclable packaging material.

The three main markets for recycled aluminum are beverage containers, automobiles and construction materials.

Tips.....

REDUCE

When purchasing aluminum foil, look for packaging that has been reduced – Alcan's aluminum foil packaging has been reduced by 27%.

Watch for lightweighting when you shop. Aluminum cans have been lightweighted – this means they have gotten thinner. Cans are 47-52% thinner now than they were in 1972.

REUSE

Reuse aluminum pie plates at home for baking and cooking. Aluminum pie plates and foil can be used as a craft material. Aluminum foil can be wiped clean and used again.

RECYCLE

Pull-tabs should be left on aluminum cans for recycling.

RETURN

Shoppers pay a deposit on all aluminum beverage containers in British Columbia. Return cans for a refund (when the can is not crushed or ripped). Your local Return-It Centre, Liquor Distribution Branch, bottle depot, Changes Recycling Centre or retailer will accept your returns.

Recycling Web Sites
Aluminum
www.alcan.com
www.aluminum.org

Recycling
www.rcbc.bc.ca
www.gvrd.bc.ca
www.enrcorpinc.com
www.enr.gov.bc.ca
www.obviously.com

Sources
The Aluminum Association

www.aluminum.org

Alcan B.C. (Vancouver, B.C.)

www.lasallehs.org/cours/es/science/environmentalscience

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Aluminum Marketing Council

RECYCLING QUESTIONS?
call the B.C. Recycling Hotline at (604) 732 9253 or 1 800 667 4321

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