

Plastic Film Waste Audit



What is Film Plastic?

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:

- **Case, shrink, and pallet (stretch film) wraps**
- **Furniture and electronics wraps**
- **Industrial use film and bags designed to protect or transport materials**
- **Bubble wrap and air packets (shipping)**



- **Grocery, produce, newspaper, and retail bags**
- **Dry cleaning bags**
- **Consumer product packaging (bathroom tissue, paper towels, and bulk item case wrap)**

To have a successful polyethylene film recycling program, it is important to collect your material with the quality required by buyers and end users in mind. Collecting the highest quality plastic film possible requires knowledge and vigilance about what can and cannot be recycled.

Waste Audit Tips

Moore Recycling Associates, recognized experts in establishing plastic recycling programs has these tips:

1. Conducting a Waste Plastic Film Audit is the first step to quality assurance in your plastic film recycling program. Collect samples from around your facility-- look in trash bins, dumpsters, and compactors for thin plastic film to evaluate.

2. To identify plastic film materials like those listed above, look for #2 HDPE and #4 LDPE identification marks or a label from the Sustainable Packaging Coalition (see label at right) on film and bags. Any material that is unmarked or for which you have questions (even if it carries a #2 or #4 mark) should be evaluated by your recycler or tested to determine if it can be collected and recycled. If plastic tears like paper, it is typically not polyethylene and should be kept out of your program.

3. If your recycler is unable to determine the recyclability for some of your films, please consider having samples tested. Collect samples roughly equivalent to an 8.5 x 11 inch sheet of paper to send. If you are sending multiple samples, label each with an identifier and keep a sample and description of each for your records. Include a business card and contact information. **Samples can be mailed to:** Plastic Sample Coordinator- Trex Company, 160 Exeter Drive, Winchester, VA 22603. *Please note: samples will be given a pass/fail only. Non-PE films will not receive further resin-type testing.*

4. Creating a visual standard (like the poster shown at right) to show what plastic film items can and cannot be collected for recycling will help maintain quality. Consider adding other common items that could contaminate your recycling stream, such as tape, packing peanuts or rigid containers to your signage.

5. Using your poster to train your personnel will help them be mindful of quality and contamination (moisture, dirt, and non-PE films and plastics) as they are collecting material for recycling.

6. Conducting periodic audit will allow you to make changes to your collection process, signage and training to maintain high quality material in your recycling stream. Always refer to your recycler with any questions about items for which you are unsure. **QUALITY** is the most important component to a successful program.



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