



City of Seattle

News Release

**Mayor Mike McGinn
Council President Richard Conlin
Councilmember Mike O'Brien**

September 2, 2010

For Immediate Release:

Contact: Andy Ryan, (206) 684-7688 OR Tim Croll (206) 684-7934
Pager: (206) 997-5972 timothy.croll@seattle.gov
andy.ryan@seattle.gov

Seattle Improves Upon Its Recycling Record

More Needs to Be Done to Reach City's Environmental Goal

SEATTLE – Seattle City Councilmember Mike O'Brien announced today that Seattle set a new city recycling record in 2009, with 51.1 percent of the city's residential, commercial and self-haul waste being recycled instead of going to the landfill. This is up 1.1 percentage points from 2008, and marks the sixth straight year of increased recycling for the city.

"We all can be proud of the progress that's been made to eliminate waste in Seattle," said O'Brien, who chairs the city's utilities and neighborhoods committee. "Yet, there is much more that needs to be done in order for our city to be considered truly sustainable."

Seattle's goal is to divert 60 percent of its municipal solid waste to recycling and composting by the year 2012, and 70 percent diversion by 2025.

"It costs Seattle a lot more to landfill our waste than to recycle or compost it," said O'Brien. "Improving our recycling efforts is a good thing for both our environment and our economy."

Since 2003, Seattle's overall recycling rate has risen 12.9 percentage points, a result of the expansion of the city's solid waste programs, such as offering food and yard waste collection to all businesses and residents, providing free recycling for small businesses, as well as prohibiting recyclables in the garbage.

-MORE-

Despite these programs, approximately half of the items Seattleites' threw in the garbage last year was recyclable or compostable, including food waste and food-soiled paper (110,000 tons), recyclable paper (38,000 tons), and cans, bottles and other common recyclables (34,000 tons).

Seattle Public Utilities estimates the city will need to divert an additional 64,000 tons of material to meet its 60 percent recycling diversion goal. To meet the goal, the city will continue to expand its existing recycling programs, and Mayor McGinn and the Seattle City Council are considering a range of new efforts, including: providing food waste collection to all apartments and condominiums, as well as developing a neighborhood study of the benefits and impacts of every other week residential garbage collection.

Overall, Seattle disposed 352,000 tons of waste into its landfill in Arlington, Oregon in 2009, a 10.9 percent decrease, or nearly 40,000 tons, from 2008, and nearly 125,000 fewer tons than what the city landfilled in 2000. The figures are based on an annual waste study conducted by Seattle Public Utilities.

The national recycling average is 32.1 percent. While each city calculates its diversion rates differently, Seattle, San Francisco and Portland are considered the national leaders in municipal recycling. Seattle's rate includes recycling set out for collection by businesses and residents, materials hauled to the city's recycling and disposal stations and on-site composting. Some other cities include private recycling of construction, demolition and hazardous materials in their diversion rate.

Seattle City Council meetings are cablecast live on Seattle Channel 21 and Webcast live on the City Council's website at <http://www.seattle.gov/council/>. Copies of legislation, archives of previous meetings, and news releases are available on <http://www.seattle.gov/council/>. Follow the [Council on Twitter](#) and on [Facebook at Seattle City Council](#).

###