

# Message in a Bottle: The Myth of PVC Recycling

## PVC is Hazardous from Production to Disposal

### Production

The production of polyvinyl chloride, commonly known as "PVC" or "vinyl," involves fusing vinyl chloride molecules with plasticizers, stabilizers, and fillers to create the final product. PVC production has been found to expose workers and surrounding communities to high levels of vinyl chloride and other known carcinogens. Studies have shown a link between working in PVC plants and the development of rare liver cancer, angiosarcoma of the liver, and other non-cancer diseases.

### Useful Life

Many products are made from PVC plastics. These products include beverage containers, vinyl siding, medical equipment, and children's toys. These products have been found to leach toxic additives during their lives. Toxins from PVC bottles leach into the contents inside the bottle, and eventually into the user. Lotions, soaps, bug repellants, shampoos, and maple syrups are some common products found in PVC containers.

### Disposal

Despite PVC industry claims, less than 1% of PVC bottles are recycled every year. The other 99% end up in incinerators or landfills. When burned, PVC releases dioxin, a potent human carcinogen that threatens human and environmental health even at very low concentrations. Burning PVC also releases acutely toxic acid gases into the environment. When buried in landfills, PVC releases toxicants into the earth, and eventually into groundwater.

*For more information, please visit [www.gtm.org/pvc](http://www.gtm.org/pvc)*

## PVC Recycling is Not a Solution

### PVC Recycling Does Not Exist

PVC recycling began in the 1990s as a vinyl industry attempt to put a pro-environment spin on their product. However, after ten years, the rate of PVC recycling has averaged less than 1% per year and has fallen to barely trace levels. The only time PVC recycling went as high as 2% was during the heavily subsidized Vinyl Institute attempt to jump-start PVC recycling.

### PVC Recycling Cannot Exist

PVC's share of the bottle market is simply too small to sustain any economically viable recycling programs. PVC's already small market share decreased by 50% over the last ten years. Due to the small number of PVC bottles in circulation, it is uneconomical to develop extensive and costly infrastructure for collecting and recycling PVC.

### PVC Recycling is Not Wanted

PVC complicates the recycling process to the point where its minor presence significantly undermines PET (#1 plastics, i.e. soda bottles) recycling. Due to the close resemblance of PVC and PET bottles and the small amount of PVC bottles in the recycling stream contamination readily occurs. Furthermore, at the temperature that PET melts, PVC burns. This ruins the batch of PET and the processing equipment, and undermines the successfully established PET recycling industry.

**Retailers: Take Action!**  
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# Retailers Take a Stand



The GrassRoots Recycling Network urges you to promote the use of safer, more environmentally compatible packaging for consumer products. It's your market, make it work for the environment.

- ✓ Work directly with suppliers and product manufacturers to demand that they package products sold in your store with safer materials (alternatives to PVC packaging include PET and HDPE).
- ✓ Work with suppliers and product manufacturers to demand that they discontinue the use of PVC labels and product sleeves on PET bottles.
- ✓ Educate your customers about the hazards posed by PVC on their health, the environment and their community's recycling program.
- ✓ Empower your customers to make educated purchasing decisions. Provide information about products that contain PVC packaging and alternatives packaged in safer materials.
- ✓ Work with your local government to ensure products sold in your store are within the guidelines of the community's recycling program.

**KEEP YOUR COMMUNITY SAFE AND HEALTHY BY ELIMINATING THE USE OF PVC**



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