











## How Should You Dispose of Packaging Materials?

Online purchasing has revolutionized the way we obtain items. However, there are palpable downsides to online purchasing in the form of increased packaging waste. Packaging materials come in many forms and must be disposed of properly according to their composition. We list below the common types of packaging materials and how they should be disposed of on the NIH Bethesda campus. [Other NIH campuses](#) likely have similar rules for commingled recycling. We will focus on those in a future article. Additionally, there are likely local options off-campus for recycling soft plastics. The best practices to follow in all situations are to follow the 3 R's: **reduce** packaging by consolidating orders, **reuse** packaging materials whenever possible, and **recycle** materials that are eligible. Please ensure all recycling is clean and empty before disposal.

Packaging Material	Disposal Method
<p>Cardboard Box</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cardboard should be flattened and placed next to the general recycling bins or on loading docks in designated cardboard recycling racks. Please do not recycle greasy cardboard, which can contaminate the cardboard recycling stream.</li> </ul>
<p>Bubble Mailer</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bubble mailers can be recycled if the plastic and paper components are separated. The paper component should be placed in the paper collection bins. Soft plastic collection bins are located in the Building 10 Supply Store and on the Building 10 loading docks or personal bins may be requested. If the plastic and paper components are not separated, they should be disposed as trash.</li> </ul>
<p>Styrofoam Cooler</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collection bins are available for Styrofoam coolers in each building on the Bethesda campus. Please contact the Division of Environmental Protection (DEP) at 301-496-7990 to request a collection bin or to learn where a bin is already located. Coolers must be empty, white pigment and free of labels. The coolers will be re-densified and distributed for reuse.</li> </ul>
<p>Paper Envelope/Mailer</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paper envelopes or mailers can be recycled in the paper collection bins.</li> </ul>

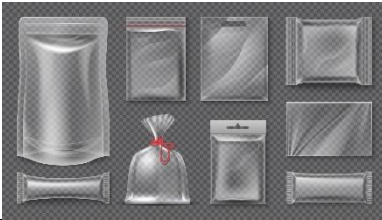
<p>Wooden Pallet</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wooden pallets should be taken to loading docks for pickup.</li> </ul>
<p>Bubble Wrap</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plastic film can be recycled using the Plastic Film Recycling Program. Collection bins are located in the Building 10 Supply Store and on the Building 10 loading docks or personal bins may be requested. Please deflate the bubble wrap prior to disposal.</li> </ul>
<p>Air Pillow</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plastic film can be recycled using the Plastic Film Recycling Program. A collection bin is located in the Building 10 Supply Store or personal bins may be requested. Please deflate the air pillow prior to disposal. If the air pillow is compostable or biodegradable, it should be disposed as trash.</li> </ul>
<p>Packing Peanuts</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Packing peanuts are not recyclable and should be disposed as trash.</li> </ul>
<p>Packing Paper</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Packing paper can be recycled in the paper collection bins.</li> </ul>
<p>Ice Pack</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ice packs cannot be recycled and should be disposed as trash.</li> </ul>

Shrink Wrap



- Shrink wrap is a plastic film if you can stretch the material by pressing with your thumb. Plastic film can be recycled using the Plastic Film Recycling Program. A collection bin is located in the Building 10 Supply Store or personal bins may be requested. If the shrink wrap does not stretch, it should be disposed as trash.

Plastic Packaging



- Plastic labelled with numbers 1 through 5 can be recycled. Plastic film (which stretches when pressed with the thumb and often labelled as 2 or 4) can be disposed using the Plastic Film Recycling Program. A collection bin is located in the Building 10 Supply Store or personal bins may be requested. All other #1-5 plastics can be disposed in commingled recycling bins.