

POLYSTYRENE FOAM FACTS

What is Polystyrene Foam?

Polystyrene (PS) is a plastic resin used to make many products. You can find polystyrene in solid and foam form. Foam PS is used for to make food packaging such as cups, take-out containers, meat trays and egg cartons, as well as transport packaging, used to protect televisions and other valuables during shipping. Items made from foam PS are typically marked with a “6” on the bottom, which identifies the resin type. These items are often mistakenly referred to as “Styrofoam,” which is actually a building insulation product made by The Dow Chemical Company.



What is polystyrene foam's environmental footprint?

All products have an environmental footprint. In the case of foam PS, it is REALLY light...literally! Foam products are typically made with roughly 10% polystyrene and the rest is air, which provides its superior insulation properties. That's the good news. The bad news is that, because it is so light, foam can blow around on land or float on water when improperly disposed of.

Can polystyrene foam be recycled?

Yes! The process to recycle foam is like that of other recyclables – collected, processed and the sold to end markets to turn into a new material. However, in the case of foam, a special compactor – called a “densifier” – may be used to compact the super light material and make its transportation more economical and efficient.

The availability of programs offering foam polystyrene recycling is growing across the U.S. and Canada. Check with the local recycling program to see if it's accepted, and to learn more about the process of recycling foam, visit RecycleFoam.org.

Is Pactiv involved in polystyrene foam recycling efforts?

Yes! Pactiv is a founding member of the Foam Recycling Coalition (FRC). The FRC was launched in 2014 to support increased recycling of foodservice packaging made from polystyrene foam. In order to meet this objective, the FRC shares general information on foam recycling, provides technical resources and offers funding assistance to programs ready to start or strengthen post-consumer foam recycling. More information is available at RecycleFoam.org.

Can recycled content be used to make polystyrene foam?

Yes! Recycled content may be used – currently up to 25% post-consumer recycled content) – if requested by customers.