

Report on the Metric  
Tonnage of the State's  
Recycling Program  
Pursuant to Executive  
Order 17

Department of General Services  
December 31, 2022

**Authority:** Executive Order Seventeen (2022), Recognizing the Value of Recycling and Waste Reduction requires the Department of General Services catalog the metric tonnage of the state’s recycling program and establish goals by no later than December 31, 2022, and each succeeding year, through 2025.

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## OBJECTIVE

On April 7, 2022, Governor Youngkin issued Executive Order Seventeen (EO17), *Recognizing the Value of Recycling and Waste Reduction*, which directs the Department of General Services (DGS) to catalog the metric tonnage of the state's recycling program and establish goals. This report shares information gathered through a survey conducted by DGS staff to establish a baseline of state agencies' current recycling measurements. Such information will be used in future reports to measure the metric tonnage of the state's recycling program.

## BACKGROUND

The issuance of EO17 rescinded and replaced EO77 (2021) which directed all executive branch agencies, including institutions of higher education and their concessioners, to reduce plastic pollution. EO17 establishes the State Agency Recycling Initiative to encourage recycling, making it a policy of the Commonwealth and all executive branch agencies, including institutions of higher education and their concessioners, to increase awareness of the importance of recycling and better capture recyclable material, as well as encourage the use of post-consumer recycled (PCR) products and biodegradable materials.

As part of the initiative, EO17 requires state agencies to notify employees of recyclable material collection areas by posting clearly visible signage, which also should include information on the value of waste diversion. The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) provides information on its website to help agencies encourage recycling and incorporate best practices into the workplace to reduce waste.

Additionally, DGS is tasked with cataloging the metric tonnage of the state's recycling program, reporting on such each year through 2025, and establishing goals.

## SURVEY OF EXECUTIVE BRANCH AGENCIES

EO17 requires DGS to report each year, beginning on December 31, 2022, on the metric tonnage of the state's recycling program and establish goals. For this initial report, DGS created and distributed a survey to state agencies to capture baseline information regarding such agencies' current recycling efforts and to determine if agencies are weighing their recyclable items. DGS will use such information to determine the progress of state agency recycling tonnage.

The survey contained 12 questions and took approximately five minutes to complete. Of the 12 questions, four asked for information about the responding agency, six inquired about the responding agency's recycling plans, and two asked questions specific to the responding agency's recycling metrics. The survey was sent to the directors of 102 agencies, of which 62 agency responses were received.

### **Survey Questions and Responses:**

Question: Does your agency have a recycling plan?

After collecting basic agency information, the survey asked whether the agency has a recycling plan. A recycling plan is a plan that the agency has in place to communicate recycling efforts to employees. Seventy-nine percent (49) of the responding agencies indicated that their agency has a recycling plan in place.

Question: Do you know the weight of the items you recycle and over what time period?

Ten responding agencies' indicated they know the weight of the items their agency recycles, while 52 responding agencies do not know the weight of the items their agency recycles. The purpose of this question was to gain a better understanding of which agencies are aware of the weight of the items being recycled.

Question: If you answered yes to the question above, please list the recyclable items, weight and time period.

Of the 23 responding agencies, eight did not know the weight of the items recycled by the agency. The remainder of the responding agencies provided an estimate or actual weighted measurements of the items the agency recycles. The resulting total weight of recycled items reported is 2,895.03 metric tons.

Question: What items does your agency currently recycle?

This question sought information regarding what items agencies currently recycle, regardless of whether the responding agency currently has a recycling contract in place or if the responding agencies' employees are recycling in the workplace on their own. According to agency responses, paper, glass, plastic and metal are the materials most often recycled by agencies. The survey listed the items identified as recyclable materials in EO17, but also gave agencies the opportunity to add additional items they recycle. The numbers contained in the parentheses below

show the number of agencies out of 62 responding agencies that indicated that they recycle the corresponding material:

- Paper (newspapers, office paper, corrugated boxes, folding cartons) (59)
- Glass (bottles, containers) (38)
- Plastic (bottles, containers, film) (47)
- Metal (cans, scrap) (46)
- Textiles (3)
- Tires (7)
- Waste wood (3)
- Oil and/or oil filters (18)
- Antifreeze (11)
- Vehicles (1)
- Construction waste (2)
- Other demolition waste (4)
- Batteries (22)
- Other items such as: composting, light bulbs, electronic waste, printer cartridges, cork, brass, freon, license plates (16)

## CONCLUSION AND GOALS

The data gathered through this survey serves as a baseline for future annual reports. As a result of this survey, the responding agencies reported a total of 2,895.03 metric tons of items recycled. Goals for the next report include increasing the survey response rate and bringing awareness to agencies to collect information on agency recycled items and the corresponding weights. The Department of General Services will work with the Department of Environmental Quality and other stakeholders in efforts to increase recycling knowledge and practices in the Commonwealth.