



DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES

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

TO GOVERNOR YOUNGKIN, THE CHAIRS OF THE HOUSE AGRICULTURE, CHESAPEAKE, AND
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE, AND THE SENATE AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION, AND
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND

DECEMBER 1, 2025

Authority: Executive Order Seventeen (2022), Recognizing the Value of Recycling and Waste Reduction, requires the Department of General Services (DGS) to (i) report to the Governor, and the Chairs of the House Agriculture, Chesapeake, and Natural Resources Committee and the Senate Agriculture, Conservation, and Natural Resources Committee on the progress of the State Agency Recycling Initiative by no later than December 1, 2022, and each succeeding year, and (ii) 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.

OBJECTIVE	4
BACKGROUND	4
METHODOLOGY	4
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	5
CONCLUSION AND GOALS	12
APPENDICES	
APPENDIX A – EXECUTIVE ORDER #17	13
APPENDIX B – SURVEY QUESTIONS	17

OBJECTIVE

On April 7, 2022, Governor Youngkin issued Executive Order Seventeen (EO17), *Recognizing the Value of Recycling and Waste Reduction*, which directs DGS to catalog the metric tonnage of the state's recycling program and establish goals for state agency recycling. This report shares information collected through a survey conducted by DGS staff to understand state agencies' current recycling measurements, metric tonnage, and progress of the State Agency Recycling Initiative.

BACKGROUND

EO17 (2022) directed all executive branch agencies, including institutions of higher education, to increase awareness of the importance of recycling and better capture recyclable material. It also encouraged the use of post-consumer recycled (PCR) products and biodegradable materials.

The State Agency Recycling Initiative dictates that Commonwealth employees should be notified of recyclable material collection areas, including, but not limited to, newspapers, office papers, corrugated boxes, folding cartons, glass containers, plastic bottles, plastic containers, plastic film, and metal cans, through clearly visible signage posted in recyclable material collection areas. The signage should include information regarding the value of waste diversion.

Agencies are instructed to work with DGS or building owners, local waste management companies, and recycling facilities to ensure access to recycling programs that accept all recyclable materials the agency uses. Additionally, EO17 tasked DGS with cataloging the metric tonnage of the state's current recycling program.

METHODOLOGY

To collect information regarding Virginia state agencies' current recycling efforts, DGS created and distributed an online survey to all executive branch state agencies, including state institutions of higher education and cabinet secretaries.

The survey contained 12 questions and took approximately six minutes to complete. Of the 12 questions, four requested 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 101 recipients comprised of executive branch agencies, including state institutions of higher education (Population: N=101), of which 35 different agency responses were received (Sample: n=47). For the questions that did not receive responses, due to the respondent skipping the question or providing incomplete information, those numbers are shaded in the findings and utilized to calculate 100% reporting on the data received.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Analyzing the collected data helped identify the areas where agencies improved recycling efforts and the factors agencies prioritize when setting future recycling goals. Open-ended questions, which allow the respondent to report more than just a “yes” or “no” answer, were intended to capture comments based on the respondent’s knowledge, feeling, and understanding of their recycling program and efforts. Visualization and analysis of the data are explored more in the following context.

Questions #1 through #4 were collected as basic identification and contact information for each agency that submitted a response to the survey.

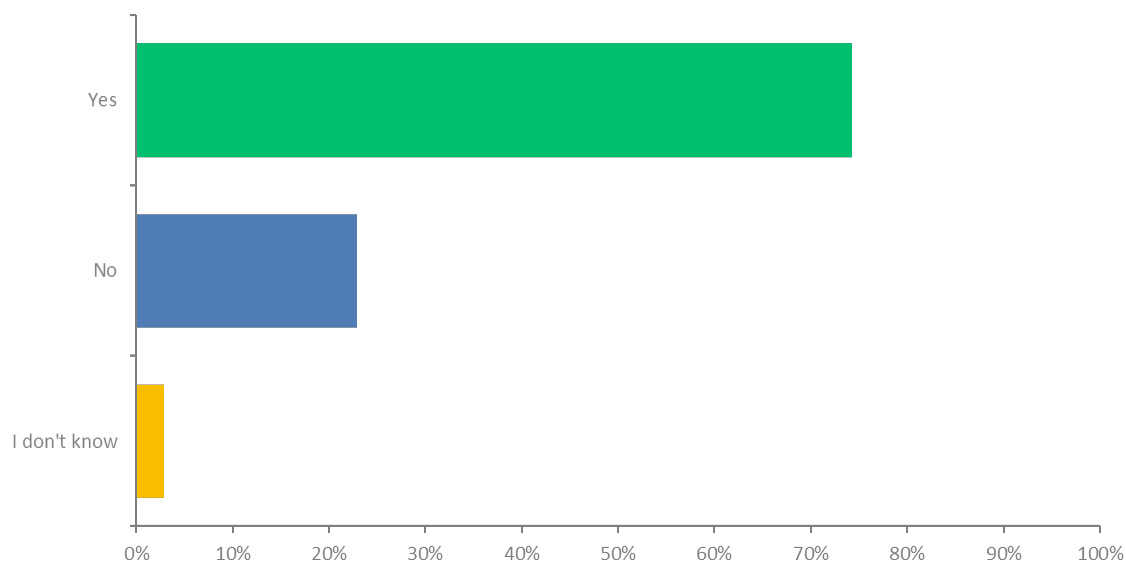
QUESTION #5

Does your agency have a recycling plan?

Answered: 35

Skipped: 0

§ 10.1-1414. Code of Virginia Definitions: "Recycling" means the process of separating a given waste material from the waste stream and processing it so that it may be used again as a raw material for a product which may or may not be similar to the original product.



Yes = 74%

No = 23%

I Don't Know = 3%

TOTAL 100%

The numbers reported in **2024** were:

Yes = 72%

No = 24%

I Don't Know = 4%

TOTAL 100%

The numbers reported in **2023** were:

Yes = 62%

No = 33%

I Don't Know = 5%

TOTAL 100%

The data suggests progress is being made in promoting recycling among state agencies, a positive trend.

Key highlights include:

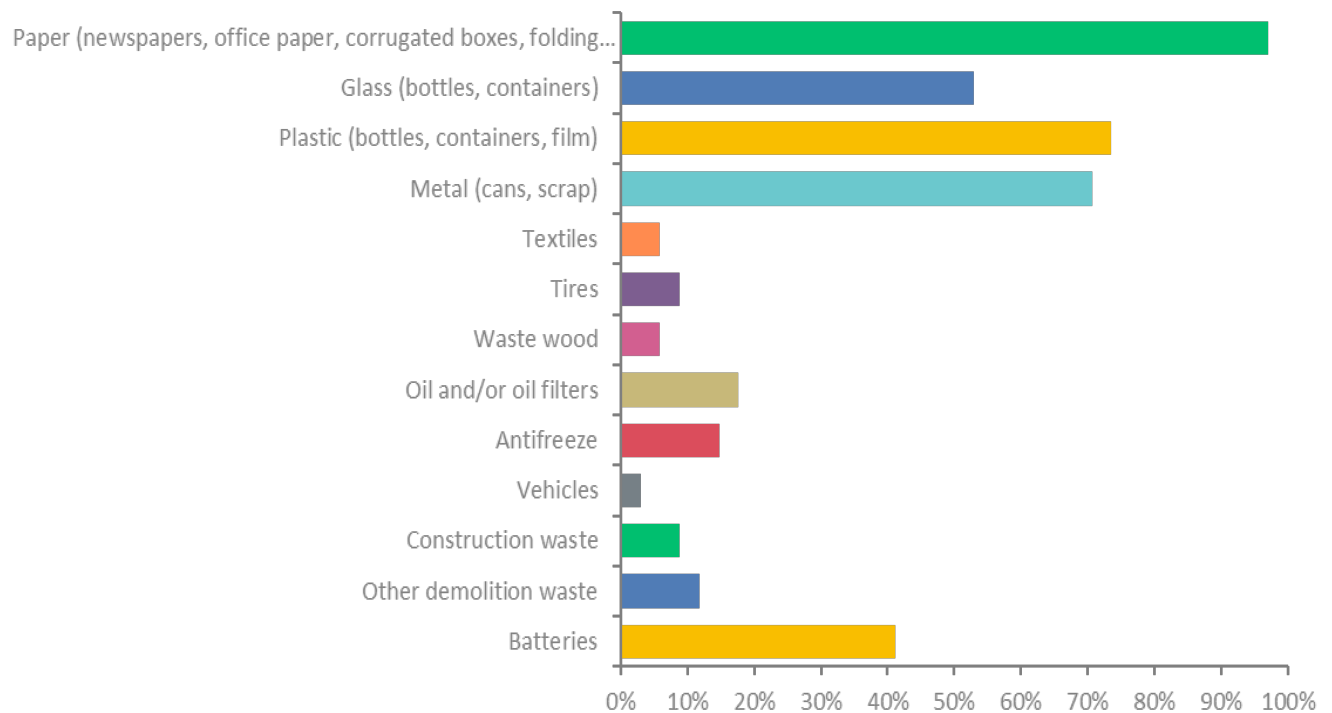
- 1) 74% of state agencies have a recycling plan, indicating a strong commitment to sustainability.
- 2) A notable increase from 62% in the 2023 EO17 Survey, showing improvement over time.
- 3) However, there's still room for growth, as 26% lack a plan or are unsure.
- 4) This progress is encouraging, but continued efforts are necessary to reach 100% adoption and maximize environmental impact.

QUESTION #6

What items does your agency currently recycle?

Answered: 34

Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Paper (newspapers, office paper, corrugated boxes, folding cartons)	97.06%	33
Glass (bottles, containers)	52.94%	18
Plastic (bottles, containers, film)	73.53%	25
Metal (cans, scrap)	70.59%	24
Textiles	5.88%	2
Tires	8.82%	3
Waste wood	5.88%	2
Oil and/or oil filters	17.65%	6
Antifreeze	14.71%	5
Vehicles	2.94%	1
Construction waste	8.82%	3
Other demolition waste	11.76%	4
Batteries	41.18%	14
TOTAL		140

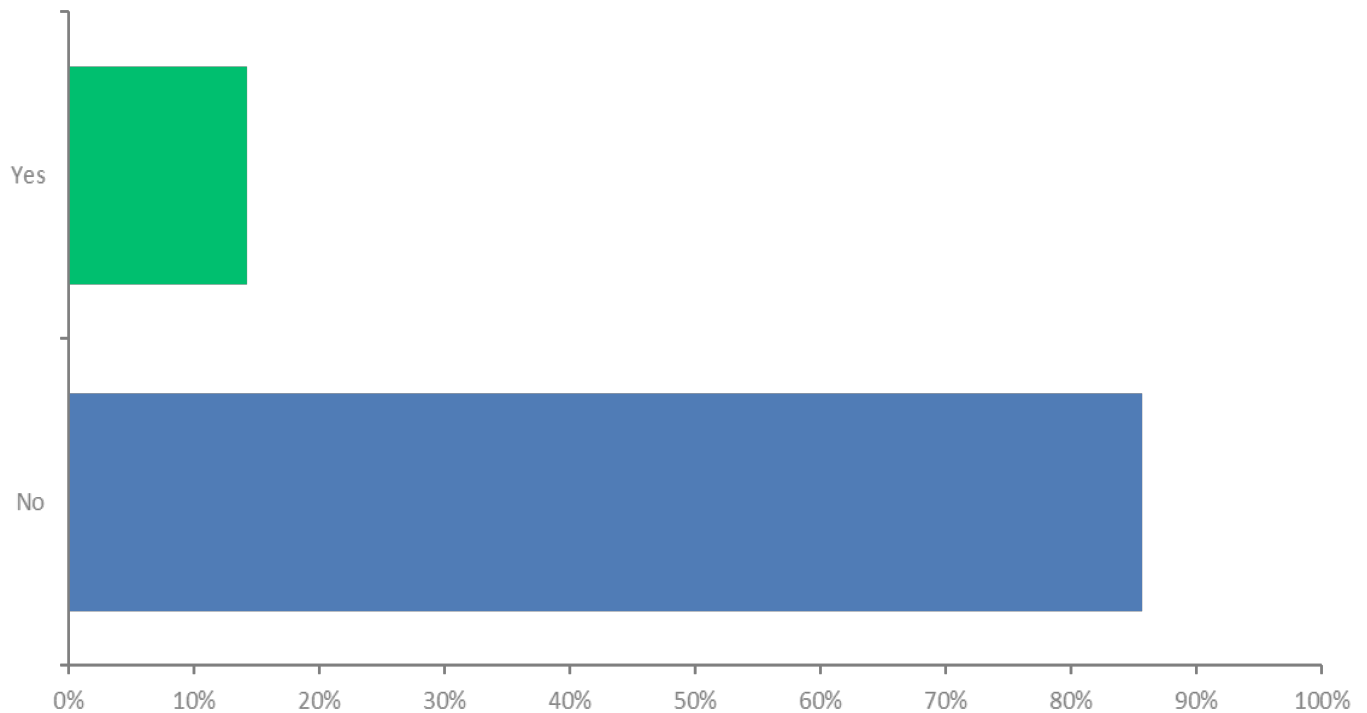
Most of the responding agencies recycle paper, plastic, and metal. Many agencies also recycle glass and batteries. Several agencies that have fleet vehicles recycle antifreeze, oil, and oil filters. The recycling of other materials is not as widespread, suggesting additional growth of recycling programs may be needed to maximize environmental impact.

QUESTION #7

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

Answered: 35

Skipped: 0



Yes = 14%

No = 86%

TOTAL 100%

While most of the agencies in the Commonwealth have recycling programs, many of those agencies do not know the weight or amount of the items that are being recycled or provided no weight data. Tracking these weights may present a more complete picture as to the robustness of the Commonwealth's recycling efforts.

QUESTION #8

If you answered yes to Question 7, please list the recyclable items, weight and time period.

Answered: 14

Skipped: 21

The responses ran the gamut from agencies supplying actual weights, to explanations as to why the agency didn't or couldn't track the weight of the recyclable material.

- Paper, 100 lbs, monthly
- 21,260 lbs of scrap metal this calendar year
- about 400 lbs. per month
- We do not know the weight of everything we recycle, just a snapshot from a few offices of specific items. NRO – Approx 73 lbs. of paper, 4 lbs. of plastic, and 4 lbs. of metal per month. VRO – 5,496 lbs. of paper, 437 lbs. of cardboard, 200 lbs. of plastic, 10 lbs. of tin, 160 lbs. of aluminum per year (2024). TRO – Plastic film recycled monthly. Total of 96 lbs. in 2024 CO – 3,130 lbs. of compost over a 12-month period. This data does not reflect the full amount recycled . . . Most of our offices have a recycling contract in place, but not all of them.
- FY25 * Paper/Cardboard: 158,216 lbs. *Scrap Wood: 122,560 lbs. *Lead Acid Batteries: 22,305 lbs. *Scrap Metal: 77.03 Tons *Brass: 326,439 lbs. FY24 *Paper/Cardboard: 104,667 lbs. *Waste Oil: 4,8076 Gallons *Brass: 80,439 lbs. *Scrap Metal: 1,146.7 Tons *Textiles: 8,180 lbs.
- The items are taken for recycling by an employee. The agency does not have the information requested.
- This information is not available as all [agency] offices are located within different commercially leased office space all across the Commonwealth. Each landlord manages their properties slightly different from one another. Some locations recycle while others do not; mostly based on the geographic location of a nearby recycling center and associated costs the landlord is willing to spend towards recycling efforts.
- The agency supplies recycling bins for employees to use, and the landlord's cleaning crew collects them daily. We don't keep track.

These responses suggest:

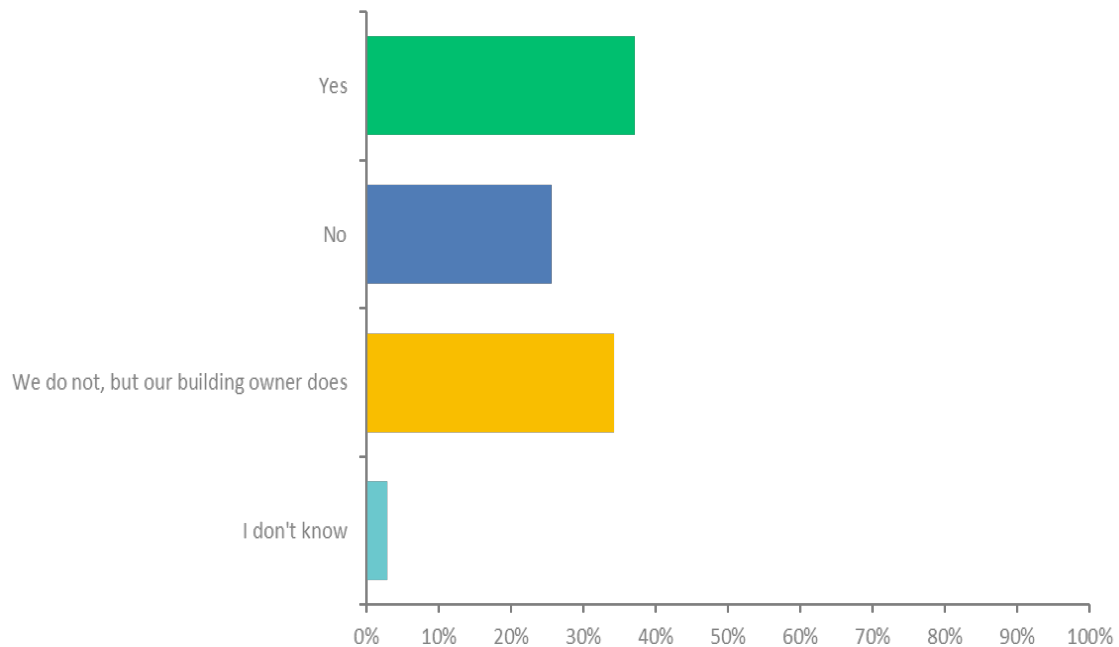
- 1) Underreporting: Actual recycling efforts may be higher than reported.
- 2) Lack of tracking: Many agencies do not monitor or record recycling weights.
- 3) Knowledge gap: Agencies may not have the necessary data or understanding.

QUESTION #9

Does your agency have a recycling contract in place?

Answered: 35

Skipped: 0



Yes = 37%

No = 26%

Building owner = 34%

I Don't Know = 3%

TOTAL 100%

For those agencies that do recycle, the answers are split almost 50/50 on if the agency itself has a recycling contract or if the building owner has a recycling contract.

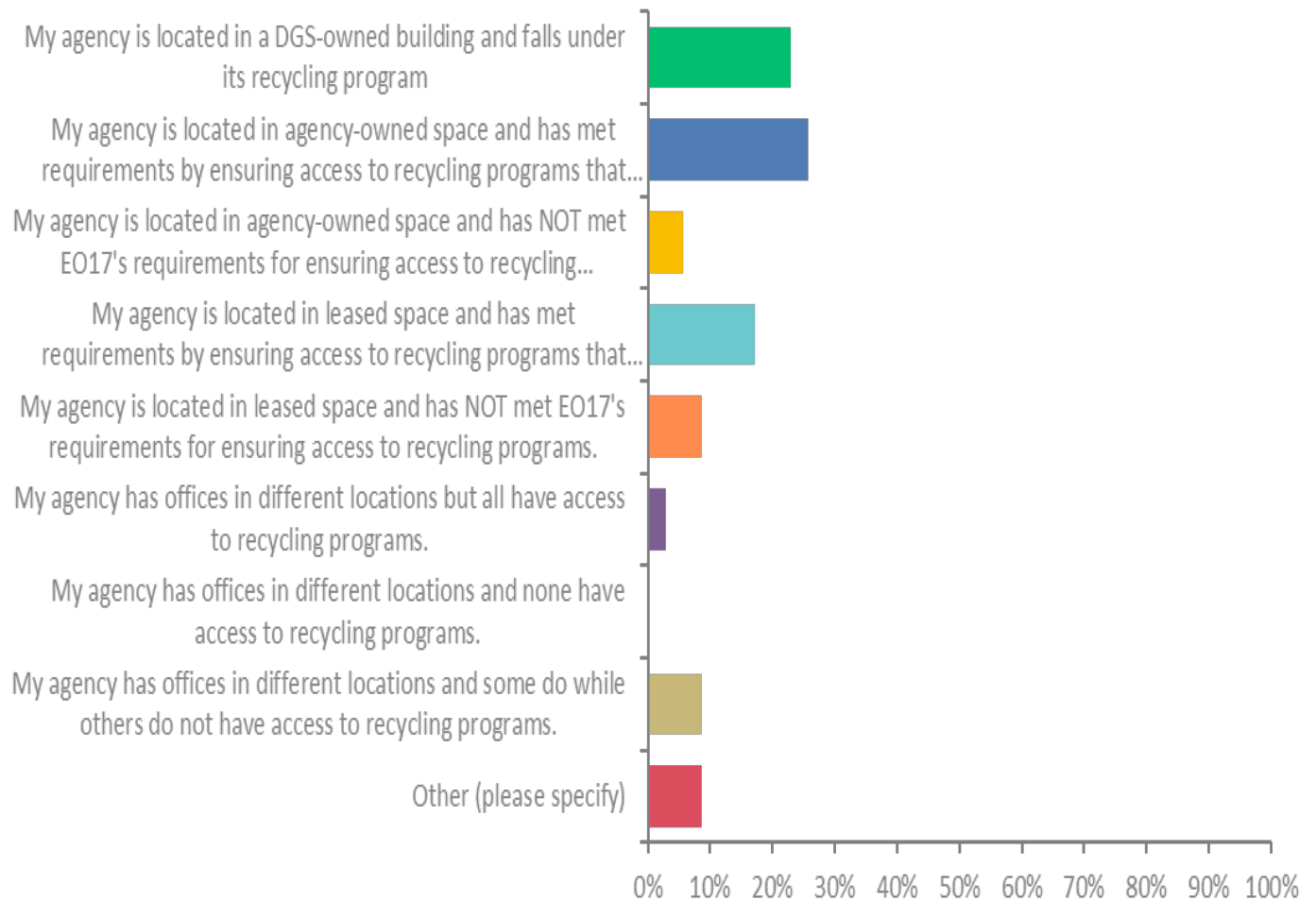
For those agencies that do not have a recycling contract, efforts should be made to either have the building owner enter into a recycling contract or have the agency itself procure recycling services.

QUESTION #10

If your agency has a recycling contract, what items are recycled under the contract?

Answered: 16

Skipped: 19



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Paper (newspapers, corrugated cardboard, office paper, mixed paper, etc.)	100.00%	16
Plastics (bottles, containers)	68.75%	11
Glass (bottles, containers)	56.25%	9
Metal (scrap, aluminum, tin cans)	50.00%	8
Waste wood	12.50%	2
Textiles	12.50%	2
Tires	12.50%	2
Used oil and/or oil filters	25.00%	4
Antifreeze	25.00%	4
Vehicles	6.25%	1
Construction waste	12.50%	2
Other demolition waste	12.50%	2
Batteries	25.00%	4
TOTAL		67

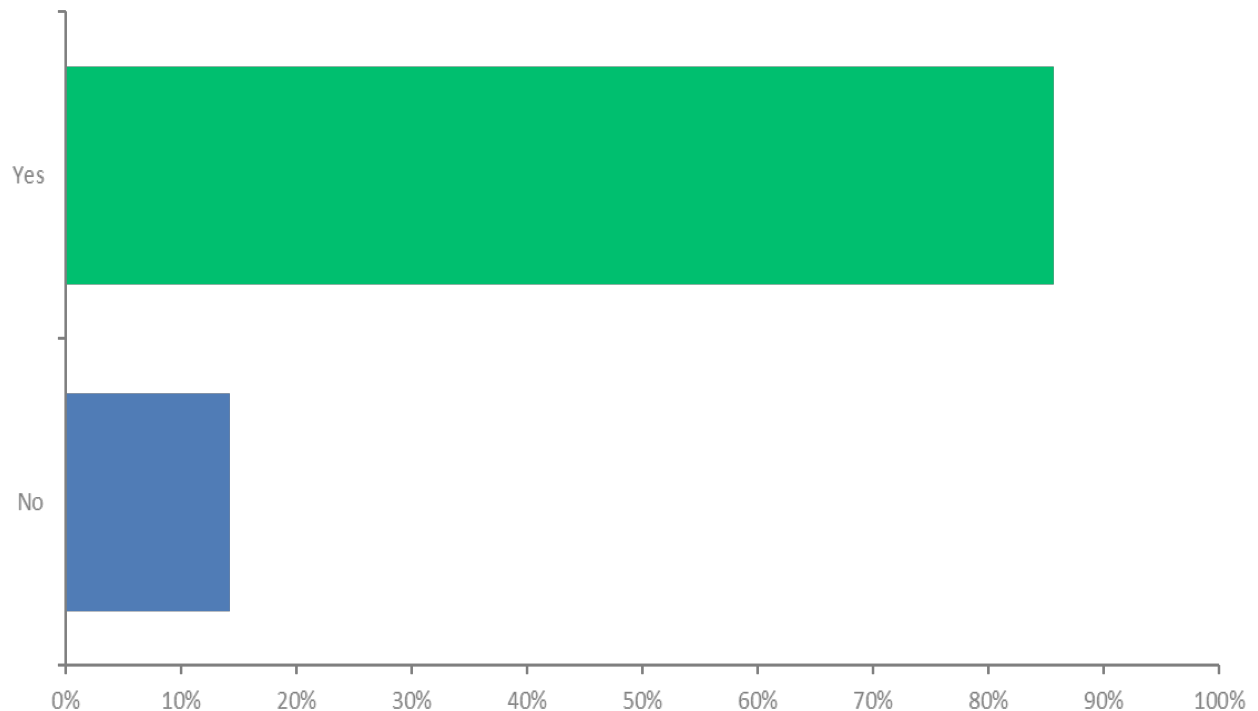
The responses to question ten are similar to question six, with paper, plastics, metal, and glass being among the most recycled items, while oil and/or oil filters, antifreeze, and batteries are recycled by a significant number of the responding agencies.

QUESTION #11

EO17's State Agency Initiative to Encourage Recycling requires all executive branch agencies to post signage to notify employees of recyclable material collection areas for certain items and inform them regarding the value of waste diversion. Has your agency met this requirement?

Answered: 35

Skipped: 0



Yes = 86%

No = 14%

TOTAL 100%

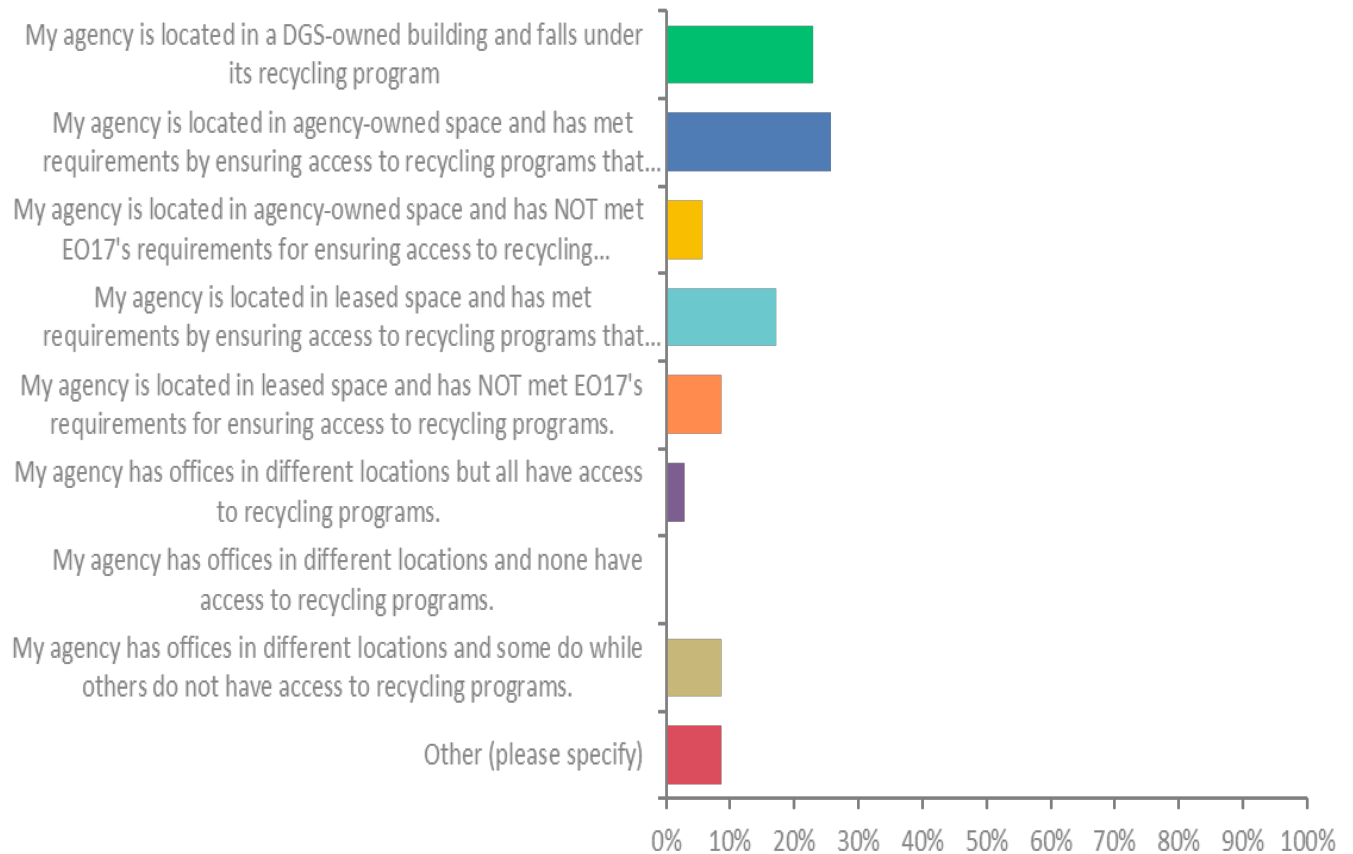
The vast majority of responding agencies comply with this requirement. Agencies that do not comply with this requirement may need to seek assistance with their signage needs.

QUESTION #12

EO17 requires agencies to work with DGS, if in DGS-owned buildings, or with their building owner and local waste management company or recycling facility to ensure access to recycling programs that access all agency collected materials. Has your agency met this requirement?

Answered: 35

Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
My agency is located in a DGS-owned building and falls under its recycling program	22.86%	8
My agency is located in agency-owned space and has met requirements by ensuring access to recycling programs that accept our recyclable materials.	25.71%	9
My agency is located in agency-owned space and has NOT met EO17's requirements for ensuring access to recycling programs.	5.71%	2
My agency is located in leased space and has met requirements by ensuring access to recycling programs that accept our recyclable materials.	17.14%	6
My agency is located in leased space and has NOT met EO17's requirements for ensuring access to recycling programs.	8.57%	3
My agency has offices in different locations but all have access to recycling programs.	2.86%	1
My agency has offices in different locations and none have access to recycling programs.	0.00%	0
My agency has offices in different locations and some do while others do not have access to recycling programs.	8.57%	3
Other (please specify)	8.57%	3
TOTAL		35

While most agencies have access to recycling programs, those that do not have access are almost evenly split between agencies that are located within non-DGS agency owned space and leased space. Those agencies that do not have access to recycling services should procure their own recycling services or seek to have recycling services added to their lease.

CONCLUSION AND GOALS

This report provides a candid assessment of Virginia's state agency recycling efforts acknowledging both progress and challenges.

The positive findings include data that reports 74% of state agencies have a recycling plan, a slight uptick from previous years. However, several challenges and opportunities include the low response rate that limits generalizability. The underreporting of recycling weights can be coupled with the lack of tracking systems and resources.

Key recommendations include:

1. Integrating recycling plans into new employee onboarding.
2. Designating a recycling point person.
3. Utilizing Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) guidance and resources.
4. Developing a standard formula for measuring recycling metric tons.

DGS and DEQ will continue supporting Virginia state agencies' recycling efforts. By addressing the challenges and monitoring the progress, Virginia can enhance its state agency recycling initiatives, promote sustainability, and achieve EO17 goals.

APPENDIX A
EXECUTIVE ORDER #17



*Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of the Governor*

Executive Order

NUMBER SEVENTEEN (2022)

RECOGNIZING THE VALUE OF RECYCLING AND WASTE REDUCTION

By virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor, I hereby issue this Executive Order to recognize the value of recycling, to help create new clean technology jobs, and to help stop food waste.

Importance of the Initiative

Americans today recycle less than they did a generation ago, yet there are more opportunities for post-consumer recycled products than ever before. Recycling and reuse activities account for over 750,000 jobs nationwide. Food waste comprises the single largest category of waste by volume disposed of in landfills. We need to conserve our natural resources, reduce the amount of recyclable materials and waste that goes into landfills, and promote new clean energy jobs here in Virginia. Recognizing and promoting the importance of recycling has the potential to positively impact the Commonwealth's environment, providing cleaner air and water, as well as create new clean technology jobs.

Directive

Accordingly, pursuant to the authority vested in me as the Chief Executive Officer of the Commonwealth, and pursuant to Article V of the Constitution of Virginia and the laws of the Commonwealth, I hereby order my administration to take the following actions to address our ideals of environmental stewardship:

1. Recognition of the Value of Recyclable Material

A. State Agency Initiative to Encourage Recycling

It is the policy of the Commonwealth, and all executive branch state agencies, including state institutions of higher education, and their concessioners (Agency or Agencies) 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.

In accordance with the State Agency Recycling Initiative, employees of the Commonwealth should be notified of the recyclable material collection areas, including, but not limited to, newspapers, office papers, corrugated boxes, folding cartons, glass containers, plastic bottles, plastic containers, plastic film, and metal cans through clearly visible signage posted in recyclable material collection areas. The signage should include information regarding the value of waste diversion.

It shall be the official responsibility of Agencies to work with the Department of General Services, or building property owners and local waste management companies and recycling facilities, as appropriate, to ensure access to recycling programs that accept all Agency collected materials. .

B. Virginia State Parks Plan

The Department of Conservation and Recreation, shall report to the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources with an assessment plan for a Virginia State Parks Campaign in accordance with the State Agency Recycling Initiative to determine the necessary resources to increase the capacity to capture recyclable materials, including increasing the recycling receptacles in Virginia's State Parks and necessary requests for resources to implement the Virginia State Parks Plan. The campaign should be developed in partnership with the Virginia Green Travel Alliance to promote the parks' recycling initiatives to the public.

2. Making Virginia Home to New Clean Technologies

A. The Waste Diversion and Recycling Task Force shall discuss ways to encourage new recycling related businesses, including collection, processing and manufacturing facilities, to locate in the Commonwealth and include any recommendations in their next report.

B. Within 12 months the Department of Environmental Quality, in conjunction with the Department of Commerce and other stakeholders as appropriate, will produce a report outlining opportunities for attracting PCR product business entities to the Commonwealth. The report shall identify:

1. The waste-stream requirements for PCR companies to locate within the Commonwealth.
2. Identify incentives offered to PCR companies in other States and identify feasible options in the Commonwealth.

3. Identify potential geographic areas within the Commonwealth to focus on new clean technology business development, with particular emphasis in rural areas.

3. Stopping Food Waste

Food waste is the single largest substance by volume sent to solid waste sites across Virginia and the United States. While Virginia families are struggling to put food on the table and our farmers are struggling to feed their livestock and fertilize their crops we must divert this waste stream to benefit people and farmers in need.

The Department of Environmental Quality in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services shall work in partnership with large-scale suppliers of food such as food manufacturers, grocery retailers, sports arenas, schools, hotels and banquet facilities to identify appropriate strategies to reduce food waste in their respective sectors by encouraging donations to needy individuals, food for animals or for composting purposes.

4. Annual Report to Increase Transparency

The Department of General Services shall catalog the metric tonnage of the state's recycling program and establish goals by December 31, 2022 for each succeeding year for state agency recycling through 2025.

The Department shall report to the Governor and the Chairs of the House Agriculture, Chesapeake, and Natural Resources Committee and the Senate Agriculture, Conservation, and Natural Resources of the progress of the State Agency Recycling Initiative by no later than December 1, 2022, and each succeeding year.

5. Exclusions

Nothing in this Order shall restrict any Agency from using any items as necessary to respond to any executive action declaring a state of emergency or order of public health emergency that would otherwise be restricted in use by this Order.

This Executive Order rescinds and replaces Executive Order No. 77 (2021) issued by Governor Ralph S. Northam.

Effective Date

This Executive Order shall be effective upon its signing and shall remain in full force and effect unless amended or rescinded by further executive order.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia this 7th day of April 2022.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Glenn Youngkin".

Glenn Youngkin, Governor

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kay Coles James".

Kay Coles James
Secretary of the Commonwealth

APPENDIX B

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q1 Agency name

Q2 Agency head name

Q3 Your name and title, if not agency head

Q4 Enter the email of an appropriate Executive Order 17 contact for your agency.

Q5 Does your agency have a recycling plan?

Q6 What items does your agency currently recycle?

Q7 Do you know the weight of the items you recycle and over what time period? For example, 78 pounds of office paper recycled each month.

Q8 If you answered yes to Question 7, please list the recyclable items, weight and time period.

Q9 Does your agency have a recycling contract in place?

Q10 If your agency has a recycling contract, what items are recycled under the contract?

Q11 EO17's State Agency Initiative to Encourage Recycling requires all executive branch agencies to post signage to notify employees of recyclable material collection areas for certain items and inform them regarding the value of waste diversion. Has your agency met this requirement?

Q12 EO17 requires agencies to work with DGS, if in DGS-owned buildings, or with their building owner and local waste management company or recycling facility to ensure access to recycling programs that access all agency collected materials. Has your agency met this requirement?