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### **MIND THE CARTON RECYCLING GAP, MINNESOTA**

*Minnesotans are good recyclers, but many are not aware they should be recycling food and beverage cartons*

**DENTON, Texas** – A recent survey commissioned by the [Carton Council of North America](#) revealed that while Minnesotans do a good job of recycling most materials, there is a gap in awareness that food and beverage cartons, such as those that package milk, juice and broth, should be recycled.

The survey showed that more than 76 percent of respondents reported they recycle materials like aluminum cans, paper and plastic bottles, compared to just 64 percent that report they always recycle their cartons.

“While these reported rates are actually pretty strong, we want to take advantage of the state’s high support of recycling to ensure that this is also applying to food and beverage cartons,” said Jason Pelz, vice president of recycling projects for the Carton Council of North America and circular economy director for Tetra Pak. “The materials from recycled cartons are valuable and put to many uses, including to make new paper products, as well as environmentally friendly building materials.”

Minnesota is at the forefront of carton recycling technology. Last year, [Dem-Con Companies](#), a Shakopee-based recycling, processing and disposal company, piloted a carton recycling robot that uses artificial intelligence to sort food and beverage cartons from other materials.

“Installing the robot last year has allowed us to increase our carton recovery, capturing a valuable commodity for recycling, with less reliance on manual labor, our number one challenge in the recycling industry,” said Bill Keegan, president of Dem-Con Companies. “By using artificial intelligence, the robot learns more every day, improving its efficiency at sorting cartons. When the robot arrived, it initially had a lot of learning to do, but within weeks, it progressed before our eyes. We watched it develop its recognition capabilities and now it does an excellent job, but still continues to learn and improve. It’s consistent, reliable, and I would definitely recommend this to other facilities that are looking to improve their sorting capabilities.”



To help raise awareness of food and beverage carton recycling in Minnesota, the Carton Council, an industry organization whose mission is to increase recycling of food and beverage cartons in the U.S. and Canada, is launching a new consumer education campaign. Beginning now through the end of the year, residents in Minneapolis, St. Paul, Bloomington, Brooklyn Park, Plymouth and Maple Grove will begin seeing materials on social media with more information about carton recycling in Minnesota. Using innovative digital outreach approaches including a Facebook chatbot, an online quiz and pledge, the campaign will seek to convert audiences into carton recycling champions.

“Recycling is still one of the easiest ways to help our planet, and we’re working to ensure recycling of food and beverage cartons is as convenient as possible for Minnesotans, both at the curb and at the recycling facilities,” said Pelz.

The Carton Council formed in 2009 to increase recycling of cartons used to package many food and beverage products, such as milk, juice, water, soup, broth, beans and wine. At that time, only 18 percent of U.S. households could recycle their cartons through local programs. Now, more than 62 percent of homes have access, representing 73.2 million households in 13,427 communities.

#### **ABOUT THE CARTON COUNCIL**

The Carton Council is composed of four leading carton manufacturers, Elopak, SIG Combibloc, Evergreen Packaging and Tetra Pak. Formed in 2009, the Carton Council works to deliver long-term collaborative solutions in order to divert valuable cartons from the landfill. Through a united effort, the Carton Council is committed to building a sustainable infrastructure for carton recycling nationwide and works toward their continual goal of adding access to carton recycling throughout the U.S. For more information, visit [CartonOpportunities.org](http://CartonOpportunities.org).

#### **ABOUT FOOD AND BEVERAGE CARTONS**

Cartons, which are made mostly from paper, a renewable resource, have become popular containers for food and beverage products as they are lightweight and compact, with a low carbon footprint. When recycled, they are used to make office and writing paper, tissues, paper towels, and even sustainable construction materials.

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