

# memo

**To:** Dr. Archibald  
**From:** Cameron Becker  
**Date:** October 23, 2019  
**Re:** Recology Solid Waste Facility

---

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this memo is to discuss our trip to the Solid Waste Facility. Below will discuss what we learned. This includes the recycling process at this particular facility, and more specific details.

**Discussion:**

On October 18, 2019, my Engineering 115 Lab went to a solid waste facility. The name of this particular facility is Recology. We visited the location in Arcata, CA, but Recology has other locations throughout California, Oregon and Washington. This trip was structured as an informational tour. We were informed about the processes and inner workings of the facility, and we were given a tour. In the tour, we saw the sorting process take place.

This particular solid waste facility sorts, compacts, and ships recyclable waste. Trucks pick up waste throughout Arcata and dump it at the plant. In this stage, the waste is not sorted. They have to sort the waste because different types of recyclables are used for different things, and go to different places. The waste is dumped onto a conveyor belt, and brought to the sorting area. Cardboard is manually pulled off of the conveyor belt. The rest of the waste is transported to another area. Here, paper is separated. Also, glass is shattered here and transported into its respective place of holding. A magnet separates the metal cans. Each of these materials are compacted separately and shipped to places including Oregon, San Francisco, and overseas.

An issue that this facility deals with is contamination. Contamination occurs when people recycle things that cannot be processed by this facility. This happens often, and the workers at the plant have to manually separate undesired waste. This creates more work for the facility workers, and decreases productivity. A lot of the time, contamination comes from a lack of education about what can be recycled. It can also be caused by misleading packaging. For example, a recycling symbol will sometimes appear on things that cannot be recycled.

Along with the information about the main processes, we were taught specific details about the facility and recycling is general. For example, the Arcata treatment plant is smaller in size, because Arcata is a fairly small city. We were informed that bigger cities produce more trash, and Recology's other locations are bigger and deal with more waste. Also, we were informed about the types of waste that can and cannot be recycled.

**Conclusion:**

This tour was very beneficial to us not only as engineers, but as citizens as well. We deal with different types of waste every day, and this tour helped us gain a greater understanding of how to deal with them, and where they go after we are done using them. We can use this information in our day to day lives to be more mindful about what we recycle, and how best we can help the process go smoother.