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# Purdue University Diverts a Ton of Solid Waste by Recycling Gloves Through the RightCycle\* Program



## case study



### The Challenge



Across its campus in the course of a year, Purdue University uses approximately 360,000 disposable gloves. That's a lot of trash – 3.5 tons to be exact, all of which would normally wind up in a landfill.

The university, based in West Lafayette, Indiana, has won numerous awards for sustainability. Its efforts extend to many different areas – recycling, planning management, landscaping and green construction. With a diversion rate goal of 85 percent, the university is always seeking new and different ways to reduce its solid waste stream.

### The Solution



In 2014, Purdue University added glove recycling to its list of sustainability accomplishments.

That's when it embarked upon a unique recycling effort in its Brown, Wetherill and Drug Discovery Building labs. It adopted RightCycle\* by Kimberly-Clark Professional\*, the first large-scale recycling program for non-hazardous lab waste.

"It was brought to my attention that Kimberly-Clark Professional had a glove recycling program," said Suzy Gustafson, chemistry procurement manager. "So we tried it."

RightCycle\* helps research labs and pharmaceutical companies divert waste from landfills, while converting hard-to-recycle products such as nitrile gloves and garments into flowerpots, lawn furniture, benches and



bicycle racks, and (when mixed with other recycled materials) parking curbs, speed bumps, conveyor belts and mud flaps.

RightCycle\* was launched in 2011. Since then, the number of customers participating in the program has significantly increased, leading to the diversion of more than 200 tons of waste. Kimberly-Clark Professional\* recently expanded the program to Western Europe and is exploring growth in other regions.

The Purdue University chemistry labs now recycle Kimberly-Clark\* Purple Nitrile\* gloves, Kimberly-Clark\* Lavender\* Nitrile gloves and Kimberly-Clark\* Sterling\* Nitrile gloves. And here's another plus: In addition to being recyclable, the gloves are manufactured in a zero-waste facility and feature waste-reducing, environmentally responsible packaging.

### The Results



Since November 2014, the chemistry department at Purdue University has diverted 2,266 pounds of lab gloves from landfills.

Michael Gulich, director of university sustainability, is now looking to expand the program to other campus labs as well as food preparation areas.

"Once you address cans, bottles, paper and cardboard recycling, you get into smaller niche streams," he said. "We have some addressed very well, such as electronics waste and landscape debris. Previously, gloves didn't have a solution. Anything that increases our diversion rate is god."



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