

Results of Davis Center Waste Sort – October 7, 2009

Despite the rain, a dozen students showed up to help with this year’s sort.

Amount of trash sampled: **435 lbs.** (about one day’s worth of trash from the building)

Number of trash bags sampled: **70**

Average weight of trash bags from building: **6.21 lbs**

	2007 lbs	2007 percentage	2008 lbs	2008 percentage	2009 lbs	2009 percentage
Recyclables found	78.9	11.5%	23.9	13%	79.2	18.1%
Compostables found	421.0	61.0%	90.9	47%	214.5	49.2%
Paper Coffee Cups	12.24	1.8%	5.5	3%	7.8	1.79%
Techno Trash	Na	Na	na	Na	9.0	2.0%
All other trash	16.72	25.7%	69.8	37%	125.2	28.7%
Total sample size	680		182		435.7	

The sampling and sorting methods used each year have varied, thus making it difficult to draw specific **quantitative** conclusions. However, **qualitative** observations are equally useful in identifying operational changes to reduce waste. These include:

- The largest portion **by weight** of Davis Center trash, still, is potentially compostable items (uneaten food, some packaging).
- For the most part, the building is **doing a good job at recycling beverage bottles, cans and office paper**. Very little office paper was found in trash, and what was found appeared to originate in Bookstore and/or Dining Service Office (receipts, forms).
- Most of the potentially recyclable items found in trash were **plastic take-out containers heavily contaminated with food**. For all practical purposes, unless these items can be “clean” they are not acceptable at the recycling facility.
- New World Tortilla uses non-compostable plastic utensils, and these were present in the trash. Also, the aluminum foil burrito wrap is so heavily contaminated with food it renders the foil “non-recyclable.” It would be desirable if retailer would switch to compostable utensils and avoid use of foil.
- The sushi container bottoms are made of non-recyclable and non-compostable polystyrene “foam” plastic. Is there any substitute available?
- We found 3 full bags of “recyclable” materials (specifically, rinsed out *Monument Farms* milk bottles that likely came from Hendersons, and a bag of office paper). We think these materials were meant to be recycled but Custodial staff inadvertently placed them

in trash cart.

- **The most voluminous item in the trash are the plastic trash liners themselves!** The average bag of trash weighed only 6.21 pounds; some bags contained as little as 1 or 2 pounds of trash. There seemed to be **too much plastic bag relative to the amount of trash inside**. Since bags are costly for Custodial, perhaps they can get “more bang for the buck” by making sure bags are full or explore the use of rigid liners in some locations (to avoid use of bag entirely).
- We found a few durable items (two grill baskets, one glass, one fork) in the trash which seemed like less than in year’s past.
- We found several core end rolls of toilet paper which still held ½” of tissue product. Perhaps reinforce with Custodial to leave end rolls for customers to use up, rather than throw away unused tissue product.

Notes compiled by
Erica Spiegel
UVM Recycling Office