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09/22/2009 02:42 PM

## As plastic law nears, community stats examined

By: Johnny Chappell

RALEIGH – Starting Oct. 1, recyclable items like plastic bottles, oil filters and wooden pallets are banned from North Carolina landfills. It's the state's latest push to use more of what we normally throw away – with the numbers showing that many still have a long ways to go in regards to recycling.

The new law should help those at waste management plants that turn trash into useful products. One in Raleigh produces flakes from recycled plastic which are made into everything from new plastic bottles to carpet and even clothing.

"In trash there are obviously good recyclable materials, and it's our job now to get the good stuff out and then provide that to businesses who rely on that material to make new products that we can buy again," said Scott Mouw, state recycling coordinator.

Mouw calls it the "waste stream," which he says now flows directly into North Carolina's commerce stream.

"Really what we're talking about is a local supply to the local manufacturers which is an even better way to protect the environment," Mouw added.

In North Carolina, each person is said to account for 32 pounds worth of plastic bottles every year. Four out of five of those bottles still goes into the trash instead of the recycling bin despite recent pushes from many for greener practices.

Some places recycle better than others, with Orange County's comprehensive program potentially being one of the best. Officials estimate 92 percent of the county's plastic bottles are recycled.

Guilford, New Hanover, Mecklenburg and Wake Counties are all in the Top 20, while Davidson, Onslow, Iredell and Cumberland counties are all in the low single digits. Caswell, Graham and Martin counties don't offer plastic bottle collection.

Starting in October, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources will target cities, counties and businesses which do not have recycling programs. Officials say they plan to only issue warnings for the first several months of the program.

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