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RECYCLING SCRAPPED AUTOMOBILES

Recycling Steel and Iron Used In Automobiles

Steel's importance in automobiles

We rely on automobiles to transport us from place to place. We also rely on automobiles to keep us safe. Fortunately auto manufacturers depend on steel to protect their customers. In addition to its strength, durability and dependability, steel is also recyclable and contains recycled steel.



Nationwide recycling efforts

Automobiles are the most recycled consumer product. Each year, the steel industry recycles more than 14 million tons of steel from end-of-life vehicles. This is equivalent to nearly 13.5 million automobiles. When comparing the amount of steel recycled from automobiles each year to the amount of steel used to produce new automobiles that same year, automobiles maintain a recycling rate of nearly 100 percent.

Recycled content of automobiles

By weight, the typical passenger car consists of about 65 percent steel and iron. The steel used in car bodies is made with about 25 percent recycled steel.

Many internal steel and iron parts are made using even higher percentages of recycled steel. All steel products contain recycled steel because steel scrap is a necessary ingredient in the production of new steel.

Steel scrap is derived not only from automobiles but also from steel cans, appliances and construction material.

The basics of recycling automobiles

Old cars are typically hauled to an automobile dismantler, where reusable parts are removed. After removing the reusable parts and other items like batteries, tires and fluids, the hulks are usually shipped to ferrous scrap processors where they are weighed for payment and unloaded.

At a scrap yard, the automobiles enter the shredder. The shredding process, which handles one car every 45 seconds, generates three streams: iron and steel; nonferrous metal; and fluff (fabric, rubber, glass, etc.). The iron and steel are magnetically separated from the other materials and recycled.

The iron and steel is then shipped to end markets or steel mills where it is recycled to produce new steel.

Environmental Benefits

Recycling steel saves energy and natural resources. The steel industry annually saves the equivalent energy to power about 18 million households for a year. Recycling one ton of steel conserves 2500 pounds of iron ore, 1400 pounds of coal and 120 pounds of limestone.

About the Steel Recycling Institute

The Steel Recycling Institute (SRI), a unit of the American Iron & Steel Institute, educates the solid waste management industry, government, business and ultimately the consumer about the economic and environmental benefits of recycling steel. Through its four regional offices, SRI works to ensure the continuing development of the steel recycling infrastructure.

For additional information about steel recycling, visit the Steel Recycling Institute's website at www.recycle-steel.org.