

# **IRNetworking**

## **The Newsletter of the Institution Recycling Network**

Volume 6, Number 1  
February 2009

**Lots Going On** – *The weirdness in the world economy has really hit the recycling industry. In the months since late September we've seen the most abrupt crash in commodity prices in our 20+ years in the industry. Metals dropped about 90% from record highs we saw just last summer. Some paper grades have gone down more than 100% - that is, generators are paying to get them into the market. At the same time, IRN has been working on initiatives that will improve efficiency and reduce cost for all our members. In other words, it's a good time to think about how you can make recycling as efficient as possible, and a good time to think how you can take best advantage of IRN services. Look for more information about new and enhanced IRN programs in coming weeks.*

### **IRN Program News**

OneStop, OneTruck, ManyCommodities: IRN Breaks New Ground in Efficiency and Convenience  
OneStop in Trailers: New Efficiency  
IRN Upgrades and Speeds Up Reporting for All Commodities  
Amnesty for Oddballs: IRN Organizes Citywide Cleanout for America Recycles Day  
Seven IRN Schools Top National Sustainability Report Card  
Ann King-Musza Launches IRN Philadelphia

### **Industry Update**

Recycled Materials and the Economy: Commodity Prices Tumble  
Electronics: Generators Beware – New Federal Scrutiny of Recycling Practices  
Tough Times for Single Stream Recycling

### **Surplus Program News**

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IRN Partners with National Furniture Bank Association

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### **Member Spotlight**

Genzyme Corporation: OneStop On Demand

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### **IRN PROGRAM NEWS**

**[OneStop, OneTruck, ManyCommodities: IRN Breaks New Ground.](#)** After years wringing inefficiencies out of our programs, we've distilled a whole lot of flexibility into one stop, IRN's OneStop. OneStop lets you recycle one, two, or half a dozen or more different materials at the same time, on the same truck. Pricing is simple and straightforward. You pay for exactly how much you recycle, and exactly how much of our truck you use. Contact the IRN office for more information, or see the [description and case studies](#) on IRN's website, [www.ir-network.com](http://www.ir-network.com).

**OneStop Trailers: New Efficiency.** Over a dozen IRN colleges and universities have found that they generate too much stuff or have no good place to hold it, so they can't take advantage of OneStop on IRN's truck. We've set them up with OneStop trailers. We spot a trailer in on campus, and the school fills it with just about whatever they want – electronics, universals, excess furniture, doors and windows, cabinets, appliances, pallets ... When the trailer's full, they call IRN. We either clean out the trailer, or swap the full for an empty. Either way, it's the OneStop model: one phone call, one pickup, lots of stuff out of the waste stream, and a very cost effective recycling program. Contact [Dana Draper](#) for more information, or call 603-229-1962.

**IRN Upgrades Reporting.** Behind the scenes we've been steadily upgrading our material tracking and reporting capabilities. Now, thanks to Lynne Raleigh's programming skills, we can crow about an order-of-magnitude jump in the quality and timeliness of IRN reports. ALL transaction records, including weights, costs, and revenues, will be entered in our database within two or three days of any transaction, and we can pull the information out just about any way you'd like, graphically, in text, or in an Excel spreadsheet that you can manipulate further.

**[Citywide Amnesty for Oddballs Captures 35,000 Pounds.](#)** Working with the Concord (NH) Chamber of Commerce, IRN organized a city-wide amnesty for electronics, universals, and other nontraditional recyclables. IRN dispatched trucks to about 45 businesses around the city, picking up computers and monitors, fluorescents, batteries, surplus, and other stuff that tends to pile up in basements and storage rooms. This built on the success of a [recycling day we managed for insurer Northeast Delta Dental](#) last summer; Delta Dental opened the collection to its employees as well, letting them clear out the hard-to-recycle stuff that we all have hanging around our homes. We organized a similar amnesty with MIT a few years ago that captured over 43 tons of used electronics. This kind of event is a great way to breed visibility for any recycling program, at the same time that it gets some really nasty stuff out of the waste stream. For colleges and universities, it's a sensible end-of-term event, and it's a great Earth Day event for any organization.

**[Seven IRN Schools Top National Sustainability List.](#)** Seven of the top fifteen schools in U.S. plus Canada Sustainability ranking are IRN members: Brown, Columbia, Dartmouth, Harvard, Middlebury, UNH and UVM. All of these schools have great recycling programs for the "normal" stuff – paper, cardboard, bottles and cans. They've asked IRN for help with the things that really put them over the top. All seven schools have tapped IRN's surplus property program, and four have accessed IRN for construction recycling. See further information in the [Press Release](#) on IRN's website.

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**Ann King-Musza Launches IRN-Philadelphia.** We welcome Ann King-Musza to IRN's staff. Looking past our native New England, Philadelphia was the most logical hub for expanding IRN operations. Philadelphia has 85 colleges and universities within a 40 mile radius, an equal concentration of hospitals and independent schools, and an environmentally-aware city government spearheaded by Mayor David Nutter. Philadelphia also offers a great network of environmentally-conscious businesses, represented by the Philadelphia-based Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) and the long-established Greater Philadelphia Commercial Recycling Council (GPCRC). Ann and Mark L have been working closely with GPCRC Director David Biddle to establish IRN's OneStop and other programs, and we're underway with our first members and pickups.

Ann came to IRN from IKEA in New Haven, CT, where she was responsible for multiple environmental programs. A professional move took her to the Philadelphia area at the same time we were looking for a Philadelphia representative, good fortune on both sides. Ann lives the environmental ethic heart and soul. In addition to her professional commitments, Ann organized and is president of Heart-to-Heart International, a nonprofit that supports a home and school for AIDS-orphaned children in Kenya.

## INDUSTRY UPDATE

**Crazy Times for Recycled Materials and the Economy.** It's a crazy time in recycling as in so much of the U.S. economy. The biggest news is commodity prices, which have crashed like a bus falling off a cliff. Here are some numbers from the Yellow Sheet, industry standard pricing for fibers:

Date	Mixed Paper	No. 6 News	No. 8 News	Cardboard	Sorted Office Paper
September 30	\$60-\$65/ton	\$55-\$60	\$120-\$130	\$80-\$85	\$205-\$215
October 30	\$0-\$5/ton	\$0-\$5	\$35-\$40	\$40-\$45	\$155-\$165
January 31	\$10-\$15/ton	\$0-\$5	\$25-\$30	\$25-\$30	\$95-\$100
% Decrease	92%-100%	91-100%	75%-81%	63%-71%	51%-56%

A couple of things to take away: As always, quality holds its price. Prices have dropped furthest for the low-quality paper grades like Mixed Paper and No. 6 News. Generators of these grades are now paying to move material to market. Prices have held up better for separated high quality fibers like Cardboard and Sorted Office Paper. As a result, organizations who have continued to recycle separated paper grades are being rewarded for their effort, while those who've jumped on the Single Stream bandwagon are hurting. (The Yellow Sheet tracks market ready materials like baled cardboard. Loose materials will always get a lower price.)

Other commodities are following similar patterns. For example, light iron lost 90% or more of its value in six weeks; loose light iron that sold for up to \$130/ton in June and July sold for less than \$10/ton in some markets by November, before rebounding somewhat over the winter. Plastic prices have fallen by 50-80%, tracking oil downhill. But the quality rule holds true; "red" or nonferrous metal prices have held up better than ferrous scrap, and higher quality plastics (like separated PET bottles, shrink and stretch wrap) have held up better than mixed or "dirty" grades.

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Commodity markets are notorious for boom and bust cycles. What's really different now is that it's the financial sector and the general economy which are responsible for the plunge in prices. That's a situation no one's really seen before, so there's no one able to predict how and when prices will recover. Which reinforces recycling lesson Number 1: The financial benefits from recycling aren't in the money you get from selling recyclables, they're in the money you save from not throwing stuff away. A time of weak prices is a really good time to be sure you're getting as much as you can out of your waste stream. If you're not sure you're capturing and recycling all you can, give us a call.

**Tough Times for Single Stream.** A note of caution to those who are considering single stream recycling. Single stream facilities cost a whole lot of money, but they produce low quality materials, especially fibers. Single stream haulers and processors have been able to offer great deals to customers because they've been riding a commodity price wave. But with the value their major products (mixed paper and a dirty cardboard) nose-diving by 90% to 100% (in some cases more than that, with processors having to pay to move materials to market), single stream will be looking to generators to pick up the difference. As always, the maxim holds: If a deal looks too good to be true, it probably is.

**Electronics: Generators Beware.** Between the election, the economy, and the World Series, you may have missed reports from the [U.S. General Accounting Office](#) and [Business Week](#) that fingered close to four dozen electronics "recyclers" for illegal export of monitors and other items. The biggest is Supreme Asset Management, who have been very aggressive in New England promoting their cheap prices and great service. As we've been saying for years, the two don't go together. Business Week (October 15, *EWaste: The Dirty Secret of Recycling Electronics*) "independently found postings on China-based Alibaba.com and other international trading Web sites in which people identified as sales representatives for Supreme and affiliated companies offered to sell scores of shipping containers filled with monitors." Two thoughts: First, if you have any questions at all about IRN's recycling practices, please call us, and we'd be happy to describe the complete chain of custody for all of your electronics, and invite you to inspect IRN's contracted recycling facility. Second, if you have used Supreme or another recycler who gives you a shiver of worry, please contact us and we'd be happy to discuss IRN service and pricing.

## **SURPLUS PROGRAM NEWS**

**Looking for Surplus: Multiple Hurricanes Produce Huge Need.** We'd like to give you three good reasons to look for items that can be directed to reuse through IRN's Surplus Program:

- **The 2008 Hurricane Season.** Although only one big hurricane hit the U.S., this was one of the worst seasons in history in the Caribbean, with six major storms. Haiti, the poorest country in the hemisphere, was hardest hit, but there was also huge damage in the Turks and Caicos, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and southern Bahamas. Our partners have put out an urgent request for materials, including fixed assets like doors and windows, to help with rebuilding.
- **School Construction in the Caribbean.** One of our partners has begun a major initiative to build schools in the Caribbean Basin. They've asked us to help find 200 containers of school furnishings by the end of the year or early 2009.
- **End-of-Term Projects.** A lot of furniture gets replaced over winter break, and winter break is only six or seven weeks away. Combined with especially acute demand for surplus this year, this is a great time to think reuse.

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**375 Trailers, 6,000,000 Pounds in 2008.** IRN and its partner organizations shipped nearly six million pounds of surplus furnishings for U.S. and worldwide disaster relief and economic development in 2008. IRN managed projects for more than 100 different organizations in fifteen states. Most were in New England, but projects came from as far away as Texas and California. Projects ranged from just a few desks and chairs picked up in a box truck to major cleanouts for the University of Massachusetts, Yale University, Harvey Mudd College and others that filled twenty or more shipping containers. The surplus was sent to ten U.S. states and more than a dozen countries around the world.

**IRN Partners with National Furniture Bank Association.** IRN is pleased to announce a partnership with the National Furniture Bank Association (NFBA) to help assure that no child in America should have to eat from a milk crate or sleep on the floor.

NFBA is the non-profit association of the more than 70 furniture banks that are active in the United States. Furniture banks serve over 125,000 families annually, providing more than one million items of home furniture and furnishings. In the current economy, these numbers are growing every day.

In partnering, NFBA and IRN seek to increase the availability of quality furnishings to furniture banks throughout the United States. The number and variety of IRN surplus property projects are growing every year. As the program expands, we're continually looking for qualified partners who can help assure that surplus is distributed and used where it is most needed. NFBA and its members link us with hundreds of thousands of American families who cannot afford basic furnishings.

We're excited about this partnership, which has already sent trailer-loads of surplus to U.S. furniture banks. Questions – including inquiries about getting surplus to local furniture banks in the U.S. – can be directed to [Mark Berry by email](#) or at 603-229-1962

## **CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION RECYCLING UPDATE**

**Deconstruction: Making the Best of Old Structures.** Two current projects highlight the fact that more and more organizations are thinking deconstruction prior to the start of demolition or renovation.

Deconstruction is what its name implies: Taking a structure apart to recover usable furnishings, fixed assets (like doors and windows), and building materials. The growing interest in deconstruction comes from the realization that much of what typically gets wrecked and thrown away during demolition is actually perfectly good stuff; if you were using it on Sunday, it doesn't become waste on Monday. Deconstruction grabs this good stuff and keeps it in use. Deconstruction also provides an organized process to recover items whose disposal is regulated because of hazardous content – e.g., fluorescent lamps and fixtures (mercury, PCBs), emergency lighting (batteries), and air conditioners (CFCs).

- **Baystate Health System** (Springfield, MA) broke ground this summer on its "Hospital of the Future" project, which will replace several old buildings, including some of the hospital's original structures, with new patient and treatment areas. Prior to abatement and demolition, Baystate asked IRN to come in and remove a wide variety of reusable and regulated materials, including furniture and furnishings, wood trim, casework, handrails, shelving, doors, air conditioners, and flooring. IRN assembled and coordinated crews of movers and deconstruction subcontractors to remove and sort these items and direct each to its own market. In addition to assuring the capture of usable items, deconstruction opened access to subfloor and overhead materials requiring abatement at much less cost than leaving these items for abatement contractors.

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- To make room for a new dormitory, **Montserrat College of Art** (Beverly, MA) is removing three 18<sup>th</sup>-century buildings that were long ago chopped into student and faculty apartments. After evaluating options, Montserrat confirmed that the most cost-effective path to demolition includes deconstruction of almost everything back to the original interior and exterior wall finishes. IRN assembled plans and crews to remove kitchen equipment and cabinets, bathroom fixtures, shelving, flooring, windows, doors, and exterior siding. All usable building materials were returned for resale to the community by nonprofit organizations.

**98% C&D Recycling at UNH DeMerritt Hall.** DeMerritt Hall, the physics building at the University of New Hampshire, is the latest IRN project to achieve 98+ percent recycling of construction and demolition wastes. The project entailed demolition of a 100 year-old brick and steel structure, followed by new construction on the same site. In addition to the “standard” C&D recycling targets like metal, wood, glass, and aggregates, IRN managed the deconstruction and subsequent reinstallation of hardwood flooring, slate blackboards, and other fixtures and furnishings.

**Wheeled Hampers: Smooth Rolling Option for Small Renovation and Construction.** A year ago Harvard Business School and Richard White Sons (RWS) handed us a challenge: a complex interior gut/renovation with lots of wastes; a 95% recycling goal; no room onsite for a container, but just enough space, 200 feet away, for a single 15 cubic yard rolloff box.

The normal reaction would be “mixed debris.” But recycling as mixed debris wouldn’t get us close to the 95% target rate; with the complex waste stream, it wouldn’t even get us 75%. But we couldn’t put two rolloff containers on the site, couldn’t even put a single divided container on the site. Couldn’t stage materials (no storage area), couldn’t phase materials because the project had too many things going on at once.

What to do? The answer came from our own OneStop program for multiple recyclables. We brought soft-sided hampers onto the site, and had the crew to fill each hamper with a single material. This worked great for RWS, because each tradesman could keep a hamper right in his work area and fill it as he worked, producing a neat, safe jobsite and practically eliminating the need for daily cleanup.

When a hamper was full, it was wheeled out to the waste area. This worked great, too, because there was no carrying, so no OSHA or injury concerns. When the area was just about filled with hampers, RWS would call for a pickup. We loaded our box truck with empty hampers, rolled onto campus, and made a swap, empties for full. This worked great, too, because the empty hampers can be nested, so they didn’t take up revenue room on the truck.

Then we took the full hampers away, either directly to markets, or to our warehouse to be consolidated with other materials. The results: a clean, safe worksite, a recycling rate close to 100%, and a very happy client.

There was a cost premium for this intensity of service, but much smaller than we thought it would be. First, we handled nothing but source separated materials, which pound for pound are much less expensive to recycle than mixed debris. Second, although we had more pickups and handling to pay for, we were also able to access local markets for the individual materials (mostly brick/concrete, wood, metal, and gypsum), which reduced the cost of transportation.

Since then we’ve used hampers in other situations, with similar results: happy Superintendent, great recycling rate; moderate cost; really happy client. Exactly the combination we look for.

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### **MEMBER SPOTLIGHT**

**Genzyme Corporation: OneStop on Demand.** Massachusetts-based Genzyme Corporation is internationally recognized not only for its biotech breakthroughs, but for its commitment to sustainable business practices. Genzyme's corporate headquarters was one of the first buildings in the U.S. to earn LEED Platinum, and Genzyme worldwide uses an environmental management system that optimizes performance in water and energy use, air emissions, chemical waste minimization, and solid waste/recycling.

It's no surprise, then, that Genzyme recognized the advantages of IRN's OneStop program. According to Mariah Titlow, Genzyme's Environmental Program Coordinator, "We've spent many years developing recycling programs for our biggest waste streams – paper, cardboard, and such. But we didn't know where or how to recycle a lot of other materials. IRN opened many doors for us by giving us a venue to recycle materials I didn't think could be recycled. Participation in OneStop has made it much easier to say to employees, 'Don't throw that out!'"

Genzyme Corporation first worked with IRN through our surplus program. "We did a couple of very successful projects for multiple trailer-loads of office and lab furnishings," says Titlow. "Then we asked, 'What about the smaller quantities of stuff we get rid of almost every day? What can we do with that?' OneStop provides the opportunity to not only dispose of these items responsibly, but in many cases to find a place that can use them again."

OneStop works in two ways. Some organizations put us on a schedule, so the IRN truck shows up at the same time every week (or two, or every month, as the generator chooses). Staff know at all times when to have recyclables at the loading dock and ready to go away; it's simple and predictable. Other organizations put us on call, requesting a pickup every time they have a critical quantity to recycle. That's what Genzyme did.

Through twelve months ending last August, Genzyme asked for 28 pickups. But the pattern was really lumpy – no pickups at all in a couple of months, as many as six or seven in others. Sometimes we pick up just a single commodity; other times we've put three different kinds of materials on the same truck.

This flexibility is something that really works for Genzyme. They don't need to predict what they'll have to recycle, and they're not committed to a schedule. They know that whatever they need to get out of their facility, they can put it out, and we'll take it away. Internally, they've set up a simple system to let Mariah know when different departments have different materials to recycle – electronics, surplus, appliances, even small quantity construction wastes like ceiling tiles. When Mariah has enough request to fill a truck, that's when she calls.

With IRN and OneStop, Genzyme gets just the service they need, when they need it.