

Successful pilot project recycles used EPS from household recycling to produce new packaging

Household Recycling and
the EPS Cycle

In a project under the umbrella of “IK Industrievereinigung Kunststoffverpackungen e.V.”, German manufacturers of EPS packaging were able to demonstrate that sorting and recycling styrofoam makes environmental and economic sense.

Metzingen, January 2023. The joint pilot project of EPS manufacturers and operators of sorting systems for lightweight packaging were successful in extracting EPS from household recycling and separating it according to variety using innovative infrared technology. The EPS collected in household recycling is removed and delivered to Storopack, among others, where it's processed into recycled expanded polystyrene (rEPS). In this way, Storopack also closes the packaging cycle for post-consumer waste and demonstrates how to implement complete circularity in practice.

The pilot project is currently undergoing further modification and optimization, after which the results will be made available to additional interested dual systems and operators of lightweight-packaging systems. German manufacturers of EPS packaging are confident that one day they'll be able to offer their customers packaging made from rEPS that also contains materials sourced from household recycling.

100 Percent Recycled

Due to its beneficial material properties, EPS is often used as protective packaging for household appliances and electronics. While retailers often take away larger molded parts upon delivery of furniture and refrigerators and dispose of these themselves, smaller EPS protective packaging remains with the consumer, who disposes of it in household recycling. Despite the fact that it's easy to recycle, EPS is not incorporated into a sorting process, as sorting system operators do not view these quantities as economically feasible. This is precisely where the project comes in, providing evidence to the contrary and helping to make business more sustainable. One hundred percent of smaller EPS packaging is thus reused in the cycle. Compared with EPS, producing recycled expanded polystyrene (rEPS) reduces water consumption by half and carbon emissions by around 21 percent.

Storopack is the first manufacturer with a fully integrated and patented rEPS production process. Both the recycling and the production of rEPS beads take place exclusively at the company's own locations.



rEPS packaging with EPS material gained from household recycling. **Image: Storopack**

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About Storopack

Established as Johannes Reichenecker Lederfabrik in 1874, Storopack Hans Reichenecker GmbH is based in Metzingen, Germany, and has been a specialist in protective packaging since 1959. The global Group produces and supplies tailored, flexible protective packaging for a variety of industries. Storopack is represented with its own production facilities and locations in Europe, North America, South America, Asia, and Australia. Some 2,490 employees work for Storopack around the world. Storopack generated sales of €564 million in 2021, with its products available in more than 60 countries. For more information, please visit www.storopack.com

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