

# NAPA NEWS RELEASE

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## Asphalt pavement is the surprise leader in recycling of various materials

*New survey ranks asphalt pavement as recycled the least when in fact it's recycled the most*

LANHAM, MD. (April 12, 2000) – What's recycled the most? While Americans are accustomed to thinking about recycling their newspapers and beverage containers, the most widely recycled product in terms of both percentage and tonnage is actually asphalt pavement.

A Federal Highway Administration report shows that 80 percent of the asphalt pavement that's removed each year during widening and resurfacing projects is reused. The 80 percent rate for using reclaimed asphalt pavement (RAP) is substantially higher than the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's recycling rates of 60 percent for aluminum cans, 56 percent for newsprint, 37 percent for plastic soft drink bottles, 31 percent for glass beverage bottles and 23 percent for magazines.

The extent to which RAP is reused, however, isn't widely known. In a survey of 1,000 adults commissioned by the National Asphalt Pavement Association (NAPA), Americans ranked asphalt pavement as being recycled the least among nine products. When asked which of the nine is recycled the most, 35 percent of Americans said paper, followed by 31 percent for aluminum and 21 percent for plastic. When asked which is recycled the least, 29 percent said asphalt pavement, followed by 18 percent for rubber and 16 percent for yard waste. "Asphalt pavement admittedly isn't prominent on the public's radar screen for recycling. But every year, approximately 73 million tons of reclaimed asphalt

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pavement are reused, or nearly twice as much as the combined total of 40 million tons of recycled paper, glass, aluminum and plastics,” said Mike Acott, president of NAPA. EPA figures show that Americans recycle only 28 percent of items in the municipal solid waste stream, which the EPA hopes will increase to 35 percent by the year 2005.

Added Byron Lord, deputy director of the Office of Pavement Technology of the Federal Highway Administration, “For every ton of municipal solid waste, our nation generates about 35 tons of nonhazardous industrial solid waste. Our landfill space would be overwhelmed if it weren’t for large-scale recycling of industrial products such as asphalt pavement. The asphalt paving industry is truly a leader in this respect.”

Asphalt pavement accounts for 92 percent of the nation’s highways and roadways, and RAP is used as part of new pavement, roadbeds, shoulders and embankments.

“In 1970, the year of the first Earth Day, worn-out asphalt pavement was discarded in landfills. Today, as the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day approaches, we are able to say that the recycling of asphalt pavement is an everyday business practice,” Acott said.

Acott noted that using RAP has economic benefits for taxpayers, as well as environmental benefits. “Using RAP results in lower costs. We use less virgin material and, by avoiding trips to the landfill, we use less diesel fuel. Considering today’s fuel prices, these savings add up considerably for taxpayers on public road projects,” Acott said.

Other findings from NAPA’s recent survey help portray the state of recycling in America. For example, 46 percent of Americans rated their own interest in recycling as high or very high, while 33 percent said it was average and 20 percent said it was low or very low.

They gave even lower marks to their community’s interest in recycling. Only 36 percent rated their community’s interest as high or very high, while 37 percent said it was average and 23 percent said it was low or very low. Interest in recycling was higher in the Northeast and West than in the rest of the country.

Most Americans take part in at least some sort of recycling program. The survey showed that more than three-quarters (77 percent) said they recycle at least some aluminum cans. About two-thirds (67 percent) said they recycle newspapers, along with 65 percent who said they recycle plastic bottles; 60 percent, glass bottles; 58 percent, magazines; 55 percent, plastic bags, 54 percent, tin cans; and 53 percent who said they recycle white paper.

The survey also found that Americans see the United States as having made improvements in recycling in the past 10 years: 43 percent said it had improved a great deal, 50 percent said it had improved a moderate amount and only 5 percent saw no improvement.

In the survey, the firm of Bruskin/Goldring Research completed telephone interviews with 1,009 adults selected at random from March 24 through March 26, 2000. The sample error in a survey of this size is  $\pm 3$  percentage points.

The National Asphalt Pavement Association represents the interests of Hot Mix Asphalt producers and contractors on the national level with Congress, government agencies and other national trade and business organizations. NAPA supports an active research program designed to improve the quality of HMA pavements and paving techniques used in the construction of roads, streets, highways, parking lots, airports and environmental and recreational facilities. The Association provides technical, educational and marketing materials and information to its Members, as well as product information to users and specifiers of paving materials. The Association, whose members number more than 1,000 companies, was founded in 1955.

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