

## Sustainable Textiles Management

Each year in the United States, over 39 million pounds of textiles such as clothing, sheets, and towels are sent to landfills and incinerators. The rate of production is increasing rapidly, partly due to the rise of “fast fashion” – inexpensive clothing produced quickly by mass-market retailers in response to the latest trends. Much of what is being produced are fossil-fuel based synthetic fibers, which are inexpensive to make, can contain harmful chemicals, and are difficult to recycle. Production is also resource intensive – it takes over 700 gallons of water to produce just one cotton T-shirt or pair of jeans.

### Current barriers to textile circularity:


- Lack of collection infrastructure
- Labor expense for sorting and grading textiles, along with increasing costs for transportation and processing
- Decrease in textile quality from the garment industry

While only 15 percent of discarded textiles in the United States is currently collected for reuse, recycling, or downcycling (e.g., shredded for repurposing), a far greater amount could be recovered with improved systems, and a number of solutions for more sustainable management are underway, both state- and countywide.

SB 707, a new bill currently going through the state legislature, aims to create the first state-wide collection and recycling program for textiles. The bill would require that producers of clothing and other textiles implement and fund an extended producer responsibility (EPR) program to increase recycling and reuse rates in the textiles sector.

In Alameda County, Castro Valley Sanitary District (CVSan) recently launched the county’s first curbside textile collection program. Livermore, Dublin, and Alameda have also recently implemented their own curbside collection programs.

In the last year, StopWaste has improved the depth and quality of information related to textile reuse, repair, and recycling available via our online RE:Source guide. Visit [RE:Source](#) to search for sustainable options for textiles near you.



Although advances in textile collection and recycling are important, the best way to reduce the environmental impacts of textiles is keeping items in circulation longer through reuse, repair, and donation.

### Reuse

Shop at local thrift stores to find affordable, used clothing in great condition. Join a clothing swap with friends, or share items in good condition with friends, family, neighbors, local groups, or on FreeCycle, Craigslist, or NextDoor.

### Repair

With a few easy DIY tips, clothing can often be repaired, extending the life of your favorite item for years. [Check out our guide](#) for repair tips like sewing buttons and fixing zippers.

### Donation

Ready to move items along? Ensure that they get another life by donating to a local thrift shop or charity organization. Many large charity thrifts downcycle items in poor condition into things like rags or shredded filling for industrial use.