CUTTING AND CLEANING

How & Why

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INTRODUCTION

Whether it was an outdated pair of jeans or a sweater full of holes, you've likely dropped unused clothing into a collection bin. Once donated, your old clothing is either resold, recycled, or thrown away.

Fortunately, there's a market for almost every textile product collected. Only a small percentage of collected textiles must be thrown away due to spoilage or contamination.

REMOVING NON-TEXTILE MATERIALS

After the collection and sorting phases, there are inevitably things that cannot be sold. Fortunately, these waste products can often be recycled into new textile materials.

However, donated items are often a combination of different types of fabric, various buttons, fasteners and other closures. To salvage the waste textile material, the product must go through several steps.

The first step is removing any non-textile fasteners, closures, and accessories attached to a product. During this stage, we must first remove:

- zippers
- rivets (i.e. on jeans, or nails for fastening things like belts)
- buckles
- buttons
- chords
- stickers and PVC plastisol prints
- labels
- embroidered threads or metallic filaments
- printed ornaments
- gems (usually glued)

CUTTING & CLEANING
TEXTILE WASTE IN SORTING CENTRES

Before non-wearable textile waste can be recycled, it must first be processed. Ornaments and auxiliaries are usually removed manually using electric scissors and knives. The metal parts, like nails and buckles, are sold as metal scrap. Miscellaneous parts, like stickers and labels, are discarded as waste and incinerated.

If textile products are fitted with embroidered logos or PVC-plastisol prints, then these are cut out of the textile and discarded as well.

A key aspect of this stage is to ensure that the textile product is small enough for further processing, which means cutting it into manageable pieces. One usually uses a cutting machine for this phase, paying special attention to thick, strong seams.

Depending on the recycling process, these thick seams can cause problems when cutting the textiles down to a practical size. Sometimes they create such a problem that the textile must be cut along the seams, creating thick, multilayer strips that are then disposed of and incinerated.

WASTE PROCESSING
WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

While this work may seem labour-intensive, this step is necessary to make non-wearable textiles fit for the next stage of the recycling process: shredding. The cutting and cleaning phase of the process is essential to the cycle of textile recycling and ensures a higher quality output.

A large part of textile waste processing is recycling the waste into new fibres and yarn. The success of turning textile waste into new fibres is largely determined by the quality of cutting and cleaning. Thus, this stage of the process is vital for producing high-quality recycled materials.

The Reflow project aims to encourage reduction, reuse, repair and recycling within the textile industry. If we want the industry to use recycled products, we must ensure these products are worth using. For this reason, producing high-quality recycled textiles is crucial to building a healthy, sustainable textile industry.

EMPTY YOUR POCKETS

SOME PEOPLE LEAVE LOOSE COINS IN DONATED CLOTHING

THESE CAN END UP CUT IN HALF DURING PROCESSING

#facts&figures