

SHREDDING FOR RECYCLING

How & Why



PAKHUIS DE ZWIJGER*



BMA-TECHNE
Business Technology Development



INTRODUCTION

Before recycling can begin, non-wearable textile waste must go through several preparatory processes.

In the previous chapter, we discussed the first step: cutting and cleaning. Once all accessories have been removed and the fabric has been through the preliminary cutting stage, textile waste can move to the next phase of recycling: shredding.

Because standard recycling processes are not usually equipped to handle large pieces of intact textiles (e.g. bedsheets, overalls, coats, etc.), materials must be shredded into smaller pieces. The process of shredding has several benefits, which we will discuss more thoroughly later in the chapter.

SHREDDING TO PREPARE FOR RECYCLING

As we discussed in chapter 5, ornaments, closures and accessories are usually removed by skilled workers using electric scissors and knives. 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. During this process, one usually uses a textile cutting guillotine machine ([click here to see an example](#)) and a shredding machine.

Much like a common paper shredder, industrial textile shredding machines are made up of a series of sharp blades mounted on rotating shafts. From thin jersey to thick denim, these machines are equipped to shred a wide variety of textiles. To see what this process looks like, you can watch [this video](#) or [this video](#) on YouTube.

SHRED IT!

WHY SHREDDING IS IMPORTANT

While shredding textiles is an essential part of the recycling process, this step is important for a variety of reasons. For instance, many people wear uniforms in sensitive professional situations (e.g. security guards, police, etc.). Uniform shredding can, therefore, keep unauthorised persons from stealing discarded uniforms. Thus, this process not only provides recycled materials for the textile industry, but it also guards against the possibility of fraud or deception.

Branded textile products that have been removed from the shelves or have fallen out of fashion are also prime candidates for shredding. Instead of selling these items at a discount or discarding these products into the open textile waste system, they can be destroyed and recycled.

RECYCLING

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER SHREDDING

Once shredded, materials and textiles are recycled as often as possible. While shredded textiles may not always be recycled into new clothing, they are almost always recycled into other useful materials that reduce our impact on the planet.

If you send your old uniforms straight to a landfill, you are not only contributing to pollution and waste, you might also be risking the security of your business if all information and logos have not been properly removed.

We encourage reduction, reuse, repair and recycling within the textile industry for a variety of reasons. In this case, recycling not only helps to ensure the welfare of the planet, but also your safety.



Above: Once shredded, textile waste is almost always recycled into new materials. Shredded material might not always end up as new clothing, but reusing and recycling materials reduces our impact on the planet.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Have we piqued your curiosity? If so, you can check out some of the resources below to find out more shredding textiles for recycling.

SOME SHREDDING VIDEOS

- Small textile and old cloth shredder (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YeIT6GBLBmg>)
- How to shred uniforms and clothing (<https://youtu.be/FRvIj-y3nPE>)

REFERENCES

- What Happens To Shredded Fabric?. (2016, May). Greenway Group. Retrieved June 2020 from <https://www.greenawaygroup.co.uk/happens-shredded-fabric/>

**STRONG FABRICS
CAN CAUSE
SERIOUS
DAMAGE TO
SHREDDERS**

**ROLLERS
MUST BE CONTINUOUSLY
REPLACED**

#facts&figures