



## A New Lease of Life for **Polystyrene**

Rehab Recycle's newly-launched polystyrene recycling service will increase packaging recycling rates while at the same time reducing our reliance on landfill.

**IMAGINE 300 FORTY-FOOT CONTAINERS** – that's the amount of polystyrene that is set to be diverted from Ireland's overcrowded landfill sites in the next year, thanks to Rehab Enterprises' new Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) recycling service. The service was recently officially launched at Rehab Recycle's facility in Navan by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, John Gormley TD.

EPS is most commonly used as a packaging material for electronic and electrical equipment and is known

by a number of trade names such as Styrofoam and Aeroboard. Reprocessed, the plastic from polystyrene can be used in a wide array of everyday products such as clothes hangers, CD cases and stationery.

Commenting to *Rehab News*, Michael Horgan, Director of Enterprises, Rehab Group, says, "Currently, there are very few options for companies or members of the public to dispose of expanded polystyrene. The product is not accepted in any green bin collection scheme in Ireland and most civic amenity centres do not take it for recycling. Some

*Pictured above:* (left to right) Rehab Recycle General Manager, Bob Rowat, John Gormley TD, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, and Rehab Group Director of Enterprises, Michael Horgan, at the launch of the Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) recycling service



*Pictured above:* Minister John Gormley holds a piece of polystyrene. Over 200 tonnes of polystyrene will be diverted from landfill in the Greater Dublin region over the next twelve months as a result of Rehab Recycle's new EPS service

people have no option but to place it in their general refuse bin.

"EPS is made up of 98 per cent air and 2 per cent plastic and, thus, has a high volume/low weight ratio, so even a small quantity can rapidly fill a bin or a skip. As a result, each bin lift or skip movement becomes very expensive in the context of its low weight."

Rehab Recycle estimates that business customers who use the EPS recycling service will save up to 40 per cent on standard waste disposal rates. The new recycling facility is initially being developed for the Greater Dublin region, but there are plans to expand the service to other locations nationwide in the future.

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, John Gormley TD, welcomed the official launch of the new service. "The launch of the new EPS recycling facility marks a welcome expansion of Rehab Recycle's wide range of services and provides an effective means of dealing with polystyrene. This will have two principal benefits in further increasing our packaging waste recycling rates, while at the same time reducing our reliance on landfill. This new service will not only reduce the amount of EPS being landfilled but will also give this material a new incarnation as a completely new product, whether that be garden furniture or plastic cutlery." ■

## How it works



The new EPS recycling process removes the air from polystyrene using heat reduction machinery by forcing the material through an extrusion system and leaving behind a dense plastic recyclable product. The air removed from the polystyrene is cleaned through a carbon filter system. The rate of reduction is 98 per cent, so for every 100 pallets of expanded polystyrene that are placed in the machinery, two pallets of condensed polystyrene are returned. This can then be shipped for further processing in overseas markets.

## Who to contact

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