

## **Aluminum Beverage Can Fun Facts**

Forty years ago, a brand new industry was getting its start — the aluminum can recycling industry. Since then, the aluminum beverage can has come to be known as America's most recyclable and recycled beverage package. Consider the following:

It is estimated that since 1972 some 25 million tons of aluminum cans have been recycled.

These 1.52 trillion aluminum cans placed end-to-end could stretch to the moon more than 482 times.

In 2009, Americans recycled 55.5 billion beverage cans, the most of any beverage container leaving 42.6% wasted that could be generating addition social, economic and environmental benefits if recycled.

In 1972, 53 million pounds of aluminum cans were recycled. Today, we exceed that amount weekly.

Some 105,500 cans are recycled every minute nationwide.

According to the U.S. EPA, aluminum cans represent less than 1 percent (0.6 percent) of the nation's solid waste stream.

Used aluminum cans are recycled and returned to store shelves as new cans in as few as 60 days. Which means a consumer could purchase basically the same recycled can from a retailer's shelf nearly every 9 weeks or 6 times per year.

The weight of aluminum cans recycled in 2009 was equal to the weight of 11.5 aircraft carriers – 807,860 tons – which is more than the entire U.S. Fleet.

Recycling saves 95 percent of the energy required to make aluminum cans from virgin ore. In 2009, aluminum companies saved the energy equivalent of 16.1 million barrels of oil or the equivalent of 1.3 billion gallons of gasoline by recycling.

The aluminum industry operates a coast-to-coast network of 10,000 buy-back locations nationwide and cooperates with more than 8,660 cities and counties with municipal or curbside recycling programs. This infra-structure makes it easy for Americans to redeem their used aluminum beverage cans for cash. Go to [www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org) to find nearby buy-back centers willing to pay cash for your cans.

Aluminum cans have tremendous value. In 2009, Americans earned \$1 billion by recycling aluminum cans. Since 1972, Americans have earned over \$33 billion by recycling aluminum cans.

## **Aluminum Beverage Can Fun Facts (continued)**

The strength of four six-packs (24 aluminum cans) can support a 4,000 pound aluminum car body.

Tossing away one aluminum can wastes as much energy as pouring out half that can's volume (6-ounces) in gasoline.

Recycling 1 ton of aluminum beverage cans saves the energy equivalent of 1,100 gallons of gas or electricity used by a typical American home over 3.5 years.

Each aluminum beverage can on average is made from 68% recycled aluminum – the highest of any beverage package in the world.

Enough aluminum cans are recycled each year to fill a hollow Empire State Building 22 times.

## **Lightweighting**

Packaging manufacturers conserve natural resources through source reduction, which means using less material in the manufacture of a package. This is also called “lightweighting” a package. Cans are an excellent example of voluntary source reduction because the can industry has made great efforts to reduce the amount of aluminum to make a beverage can. For example:

Thirty-seven years ago, one pound of aluminum made 21.75 12-ounce cans. By developing new technologies to reduce the can's weight, the industry now produces an average

of 34.35 cans from every pound of aluminum. The weight reduction continues through the use of smaller can ends. The can manufacturing industry once used the “206” end universally, which weighs (including the tab) an average of 8.5 pounds per thousand. Today, the industry has moved towards “204” and “202” ends, which are considerably smaller and use far less material to manufacture. In fact, the “202” end weighs an average of 6.11 pounds per thousand