

WHEELS

Old becomes new in the steel industry

Recycling steel saves energy and natural resources

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Economist & Sun Stouffville Tribune

(NC) Once off the road for good, virtually all vehicles face one last trip to a steel mill.

Automobiles do not end up in landfills because about 70 per cent of the weight of an average car is comprised of steel and iron, metals that are valu-

able to the steel industry. The steel from the car you were driving in the 1970s, for example, has been recycled into a new car, appliance, food can, even the frame for a house or office building.

Steel's inherent recyclability has made it the leader in automotive recy-

cling since the turn of the century. The steel industry recycled enough steel from old cars in 1996 to produce almost 13 million new ones at a recycling rate of 98 per cent.

Recycling steel saves energy and natural resources. The steel industry

annually saves the equivalent energy to power about 18 million households for a year. By recycling one ton of steel, 2,500 pounds of iron ore, 1,400 pounds of coal and 120 pounds of limestone are conserved.

The steel used in automobiles contains recycled material because steel scrap (old steel) is a necessary ingredient in the production of new steel. Any product made with steel contains recycled steel. The steel used in car bodies is made with about 25 to 30 per cent recycled steel. Many internal steel and iron parts (such as engine blocks) are made using even higher percentages of recycled steel.

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How does a junked automobile become a new dishwasher? First it goes to one of the more than 12,000 auto dismantlers throughout North America which get the vehicle ready for recycling by removing fluids, any parts that are still usable and parts that need to be recycled separately, such as batteries, tires and radiators.

Auto dismantlers also flatten the hulk of the car before sending it to a ferrous scrap dealer where it will be fed into a shredder that crushes and rips the car into fist-sized chunks of material in less than a minute. Using magnets, the steel and iron pieces are separated from other materials and collected for shipment to a steel mill.

The North American scrap-processing industry operates more than 200 shredders. Once the infrastructure of auto dismantlers, shredders and scrap processors recover, process and resell the steel from automobiles, the steel industry remelts it to produce a variety of new, high quality steel products.

Steel also makes it possible to recycle used oil filters and tire wire scrap so those items don't end up in landfills. For example, by chipping tires and recovering the steel wires, up to 99 per cent of the average passenger car tire can now be captured for recycling.

For more information about how steel shapes our lives visit: www.the-newsteel.org

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