



The nonprofit Glass Recycling Company is working hard at mobilising citizens to improve glass recycling rates, says GM Shabeer Jhetam. Since it began its operations in 2006 the volume of glass recovered for recycling in SA has increased by more than 38%.



Recycling glass can help to secure earth's future



It is time for South Africans to become involved in our planet's survival, writes
ROZZANNE VAN EYK

SOUTH Africans profess a focus on green living, particularly among corporations, but the truth is that not enough is being done in this country to counteract the effects of a looming global warming crisis.

Already global warming is causing destructive weather patterns and loss of plant and animal life. If something is not done, our generation — or at very least our children's children — may very well experience firsthand the penalties of our unsustainable living practices.

The solution is simple: reduce carbon and greenhouse gas emissions to protect and sustain our planet. This can be achieved through recycling, which in a nutshell prevents useful material (resources) from being wasted, reduces the consumption of raw materials and energy usage and hence greenhouse gas emissions compared with using virgin material.

Recycling is a form of modern waste management, with the most common items recycled including aluminum cans, plastic and paper. However recycling glass waste is just as easy and effective, as it is 100% recyclable.

The problem is that many homeowners are under the misconception that their contribution towards counteracting the effects of global warming is not significant.

As a nation, South Africans have not grown up with a recycling culture and this reflects in our recycling

statistics, which compare poorly with other countries.

Data for glass recycling in SA shows that about 550 000 tons of glass waste finds its way into landfills in SA, but only 183 000 tons or 26% of all glass containers produced annually are retrieved for recycling. By comparison, 90% of glass waste is recycled in the Netherlands, 50% in Australia, 45% in the UK and 40% in Brazil.

The Glass Recycling Company, SA's national organisation responsible for facilitating the recovery of waste glass for recycling, is working hard at mobilising citizens to improve glass recycling rates. Since the inception of the nonprofit organisation in 2006 the volume of glass recovered for recycling has increased by more than 38%.

Shabeer Jhetam, general manager of The Glass Recycling Company, says this growth trend needs to be sustained and improved.

"Everyone can help the environment by recycling their glass — even a small change in behaviour has a measurable benefit. Why not start this year off by adopting these easy tips for glass recycling?"

- Recycle all glass containers, including alcoholic beverage and soft drink bottles, as well as those that hold food and other household items;

- Be aware of what is recyclable and what is not. Light bulbs, crockery, and cookware such as Pyrex are not recyclable. Neither is plate glass (window panes), computer and TV screens.

windcreens or laboratory glass. They have different properties that can contaminate a recyclable load of glass;

- Plan your trips to the bottle banks to fit into your daily schedule. Take your children with you and show them how and where to put their bottles. Visit www.theglassrecycling-company.co.za to find a glass bank in your area;

- Purchase an additional sturdy dustbin/container that can house all your recyclable glass before depositing it in the local glass bank;

- In SA it is not necessary to wash glass before placing it in glass banks, nor do corks, lids or any other packaging labels have to be removed;

- It is not necessary to separate different coloured glass into separate banks;

- If delivering the waste glass cannot be accommodated in your daily routine, contract the services of a waste-removal company to collect it from your home each week;

- Begin recycling at the office and not just at home and encourage your child's school to start a recycling programme of their own;

- Reuse old glass containers — they are great for storing paint, crayons, buttons and arts-and-crafts tools;

- Take refillable bottles back to the retail outlet you purchased them from and receive a returns deposit; and

- If the local glass bank you visit is full, be sure to report this to The Glass Recycling Company and try again another day.

