

Subaru of America: The Road to Zero Waste-to-Landfill

When you open Born Green, a brochure that chronicles the environmental story of Subaru of America, the first thing you read is: “Being an environmental steward means you are always thinking about the future. This forward-thinking has helped SoA achieve many firsts in our industry.”

One significant first for Subaru of America was to earn the title of the first automotive assembly plant in the U.S. to achieve zero waste-to-landfill status – an achievement, that with some assistance from Reworld™, was met two years ahead of its parent-company-driven schedule.

And Subaru of America continues to maintain this proactive mindset today, “ensuring that vehicles are green from the moment they are ‘born.’ Every Subaru built at SoA is built with environmental stewardship as a guiding principle.”

The manufacturer of Subaru Outback and Legacy vehicles is often referred to as a pioneer in adopting the holistic reduce, reuse, recycle, recover (the four “Rs”) mantra of sustainable waste management. Commenting on this well-deserved reputation, Corrina Miller, Manager of Subaru’s Environmental Compliance & Energy Section, said:

“We were given the tools to pursue zero waste-to-landfill before others and we invested in it. Today, we’ve had thousands of companies visit the site to see what we do, so yes, you can say we’re living up to the ‘pioneer’ title.”

But how did this 3.5 million square foot car manufacturing plant, working with huge coils of steel, and literally thousands of tons of metal, glass,

electronic components, and all the associated packaging, achieve zero waste-to-landfill?

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Getting Dirty and Creative

The journey began with a group of dedicated, enthusiastic associates who seized the corporate directive to reduce waste and get to zero waste-to-landfill. The first order of business was a series of carefully orchestrated “dumpster dives” to examine in minute detail what was being thrown away.

Accomplishing this entailed spreading the plant’s trash out within a controlled area. Team members then analyzed the content to understand its origin

and contribution to the car manufacturing process. This very visual display of its waste stream enabled SoA to evaluate opportunities to reduce consumption, eliminate unnecessary packaging, utilize reusable containers, and develop new markets for recycling of byproducts through innovative and efficiency-oriented techniques.

This same spirit of passion and enthusiasm in meeting challenges head-on continues today with Subaru of America's more than 5,600 associates prioritizing sustainability in every aspect of their business.

"All associates, whether they work in HR, Legal or the plant, are given environmental goals or challenges," said Miller. "The spirit of Kaizen—or continuous improvement—is alive and well within our walls. In fact, associates are encouraged to think about ways to do things differently and are rewarded for their creativity and dedication to sustainability. Prizes help keep the ideas coming!"

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Partnering for the Long Haul

Getting to zero waste-to-landfill also meant enlisting Reworld™ as a strategic partner.

Dave Schroeder, Director of National Accounts for Reworld™ said, "Together we developed best practices in sustainable waste management and provided the plant with a local solution."

There are 215 pounds of waste generated per vehicle at Subaru of America's plant. Approximately 185 pounds are easily-recyclable steel.

Utilizing ReDirect360, the zero waste-to-landfill solution that Reworld™ offers, SoA's remaining materials are reduced, reused or recycled. This is made possible through a blending of creative strategies and industry-leading waste management technologies that most businesses do not have in-house. They include advanced waste logistics, wastewater treatment, or product recycling capabilities, among others. Even for the "unsalvageable" materials left over after that process—nearly 3,000 tons in SOA's case—renewable fuel creation or energy recovery is an option.

In just 15 years, Subaru of America reduced the amount of waste per vehicle produced by 53% and cut costs to the tune of millions of dollars each year through the adoption of the four Rs and their



partnership with Reworld™.

“All of SOA’s waste is diverted from the landfill. What remains after recycling is used as fuel to create steam power for Indianapolis’ downtown heating loop,” said Schroeder.

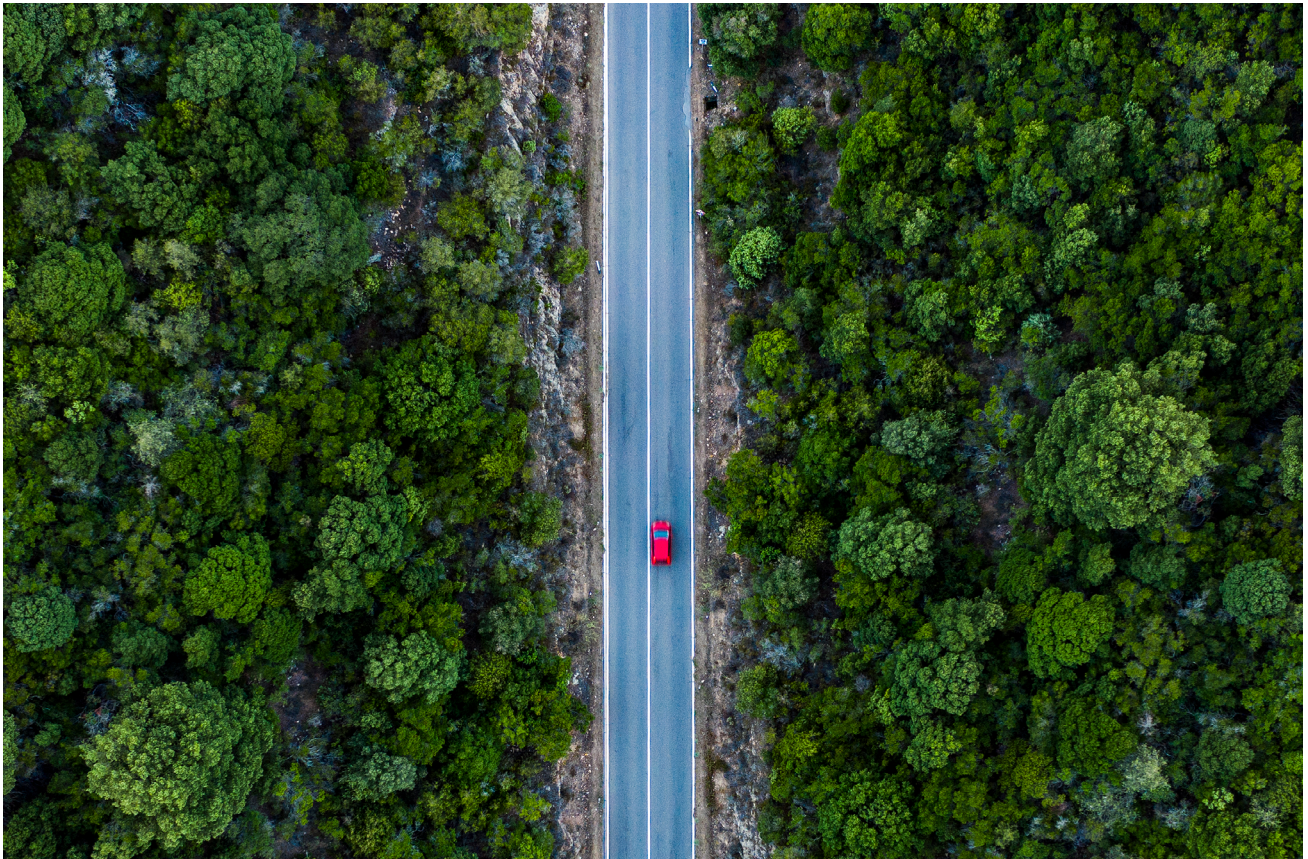
Miller added, “Leveraging the capabilities of Reworld™ advances our sustainability and zero waste-to-landfill initiatives and benefits the local community in the process. We’ve also seen other examples of value creation within our business from our partnership with them—increased product quality, efficiency of the line and cost reductions are just a few to name. Our zero waste-to-landfill status even supports our reputation and recruitment efforts by providing a positive, forward-thinking image for SoA in the Lafayette area,” said Miller.

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Inspiring Progressive Change

As champions of sustainability and zero waste-to-landfill, Subaru of America strongly encourages companies from other industries to visit and study their processes. In the spirit of leading by example, the company has started programs and partnerships to inspire others to join the effort.

When asked to provide guidance to companies interested in launching their own zero waste-to-landfill programs, Miller said, “There are three major steps to consider: One, create an inventory of waste, understanding where it is generated and what happens to it. Two, make the program your own, customizing it to what works within your culture. And three, get associate/employee input—some of the best ideas come from the workforce. It’s also important to celebrate your successes, both large and small. It will help motivate you for each new step along the way.”



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