



# New England Shrinkwrap Boat Shrink Wrap Recycling Guide

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Each year boat owners spend a great deal of time and money to prepare their boats for winter. For many this means having their boats “shrink wrapped” to protect against ice, snow, and damage caused by wind and UV light that can deteriorate some components of the boat over time. The use of shrink wrap for this purpose has greatly increased in popularity over the past decade but along with the benefits of having a durable, weather tight cover comes the inevitable problem of figuring out how to properly dispose of the shrink wrap cover in the Spring.

Because shrink wrap is a specialty film made of #4 LDPE (Low Density Polyethylene) that is designed to “shrink” up to a third of its surface area once heat is applied, it is not meant for multiple uses as a shrink film. Some people will get creative and reuse their shrink wrap cover as a form fitted tarp or use the plastic for applications around the house such as covering wood piles or lawn tractors. The majority of these covers however are cut off, bundled up, and disposed of. In years past this meant that this material went right into dumpsters and consequently directly into landfills but now the focus has been on finding an easy, cost effective way of recycling this valuable material and repurposing it for another use.

What are some of the uses of recycled shrink wrap? Because shrink wrap film is made from virgin resin and contains a high amount of UV inhibitor, this material is valuable for use in secondary films such as those used in construction and agricultural applications. Another popular use for this type of material is in the manufacture of composite decking, guard rail mounting blocks, playground slides, and a variety of other useful items made from #4 LDPE, therefore recycling this shrink wrap material is a far more responsible, far more environmentally friendly solution than burying it in a landfill where it will sit in perpetuity.

**NEVER place shrink wrap in a dumpster! It takes up a great deal of space and costs a lot of money to dispose of when instead it should be properly recycled!**



**This is how shrink wrap should be properly packaged for recycling. It is easy, cost effective, and responsible.**



Recycling of shrink wrap plastic is easy and cost effective thanks to an effort by most marinas in Rhode Island and Massachusetts that have chosen to participate in a recycling program. This recycling program involves a few practical steps to ensure that the shrink wrap plastic stays out of the waste stream and is properly recycled, but we need to cooperation of boat owners to make this a success. The difference between properly recycling the shrink wrap and having it disposed of in a landfill takes a matter of a few additional minutes of effort. If you do not have the time or desire to properly remove and recycle your shrink wrap cover, we offer this service at an additional charge at certain times of the Spring. You may also want to check with your marina if they offer shrink wrap removal service. If you would like to remove the cover yourself, the steps involved in the marina shrink wrap recycling program are:

- See your marina office about purchasing recycling bags into which the shrink wrap plastic can be placed once it is removed. Your marina can advise you as to how many bags you will need for your boat. The

nominal purchase price of these bags covers the cost of the handling and pick up of the material by the recycling company.

- **Properly** remove your shrink wrap cover. This involves a few simple steps but the main thing here is to be sure that none of the woven banding material, typically made of polyester or nylon products, or any padding or other non-shrink wrap plastic makes its way into the recycling bag. The woven banding material can bind the shredder used to process the shrink wrap plastic and also melts at a different temperature than the shrink wrap plastic when it is recycled, causing the material to be discarded rather than repurposed.
  1. To easily remove the woven banding material, simply use a pair of scissors to cut through the “perimeter band” where the shrink wrap has been secured at the lowest point of the boat. Once cuts have been made at roughly 6 foot intervals, the woven banding material can be simply slid out of the shrink wrap and disposed of as general refuse.
  2. Cut the shrink wrap plastic into manageable strips that can be stuffed into the recycling bag or you can lay these strips on the ground in a flat pile and then roll the material up, tape it with duct tape and place it in the recycling bag. **DO NOT** use the woven banding material to secure the shrink wrap bundles and never place anything other than just the shrink wrap plastic in the recycling bag. Pre-formed plastic vents can be left in the shrink wrap as they can be recycled along with the cover or they can be removed and re-used if in sound condition.
  3. Remove and properly dispose of the woven banding material, zipper doors (may be used again if in sound condition), padding, lumber, and hardware used to construct the framework. **NEVER** place shrink wrap plastic in a dumpster or leave it under your boat. Always check with your marina to find out how the non-recyclable components should be disposed of.
  4. Leave the recycling bags containing your shrink wrap cover only at the designated collection point established by your marina.

The steps are very simple and straight forward and with only a little bit of additional time and effort we can be sure that the shrink wrap material never makes its way into our landfills and is properly repurposed for many useful items. There are many online resources available if you need more information about recycling boat shrink wrap covers, including videos that will show you the steps outlined here. We have made a commitment to recycle 100% of the scrap shrink wrap we generate when we install a shrink wrap cover, and we want to see all boat owners and shrink wrap installers do the same.

For more information about our shrink wrap removal and recycling service, please e-mail us with the length, make, and location of your boat and we can provide a price quote to you. Our e-mail address is [info@newenglandshrinkwrap.com](mailto:info@newenglandshrinkwrap.com)

Thank you for your commitment to recycling!

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