

The Cleanup after Game Day

COLUMBUS, Ohio – The morning after an Ohio State home football game, Navy ROTC cadets begin a cleanup operation, processing an average of 20.8 tons of waste per game.

The cleanup process supports the University's zero waste initiative and ensures the stadium operates smoothly.

The cleanup begins at 6 a.m. when Navy ROTC members begin sweeping the stadium, separating recyclables and compostable materials by hand.

Members split into 6 groups and start with the student section, then move through the B deck until the entire stadium is cleared.

"As the company first lieutenant, I'm in charge of overall cleanliness and staff management in Naval ROTC, and that includes the stadium cleanup" said First Lieutenant Michael Hunsaker.

The Zero Waste policy emphasizes the separation of waste. Policy adherence is overseen by the company leadership, who coordinate the effort across the group.

"The zero waste initiative requires materials to be separated properly, and ROTC members are trained to do this efficiently" said Jason Browning, facility operations manager at Ohio Stadium.

Browning's team takes over after the initial separation, bagging materials and loading them onto a fleet of trucks for final disposal.

Compostable materials go directly to Price Farms, a composting facility. Recyclables are sorted at a prison facility before being sent to Price Farms as well.

"What we may lack in amenities, I feel like our people are just tremendous, like the internal communication, not only within facility operations, but event management and public safety and catering and all the other groups that occupy spaces during a game" Browning said.

For the Navy ROTC, it's a way to train their members.

Hunsaker said noted that the cleanup process facilitates teamwork and discipline, encouraging members to "embrace the suck."

“We're up at 5 a.m. on a Sunday after game day. No one really wants to do it, but we better get used to it, because there are a lot of things in military life exactly like that. You're tired, you're worn out, but you've got to do this” Hunsaker said.

According to University records, the home opener, hosting 107,524 fans for the Texas game, produced 22.37 tons of material.

Combined with the following week's game, crews managed 41.6 tons of waste from the two events, achieving a 94.1% landfill diversion rate.