



CNN's Great Big Story Airs Piece on Recycling Old Cash

June 30, 2016

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A couple of the Atlanta Fed's branches are returning cash to the earth, literally.

A film crew from [The Great Big Story](#), a new CNN web streaming affiliate, [aired a story](#) June 21 about shredded currency from the New Orleans Branch being recycled into compost that nourishes soil for local urban farmers and other uses. The video crew visited the Atlanta Fed's New Orleans Branch in early June and interviewed staffers including Dean Woitha, lead business analyst in the cash department.

Woitha explained that the Branch shreds on average \$6 million a day in unfit currency, or "dirty money." Those notes are torn or taped, have graffiti on them, or are generally worn out. Woitha says that although it was unusual to wear a jacket and tie and sit in front of the vault for an hour, the project "was very fun." "If you know Dean, he was in his element," adds Robert Barkley, lead business analyst in Building Operations at the New Orleans Branch.

Shreds recycling in Miami, too

It took some time to make the arrangements to contract with a vendor and have shredded cash hauled away and recycled, Barkley says. The first load left the New Orleans Branch for a big composting site near the Mississippi River in late 2014.

[Like all regional Federal Reserve Banks](#), the Atlanta Fed produces a lot of shredded currency. Across the Federal Reserve System, about 15 percent of notes that come into cash facilities are unfit and therefore destroyed. All told, currency shreds make up some 44 percent of waste the Atlanta Fed generates. To devise an environmentally responsible way to dispose of chopped-up cash, the Atlanta Reserve Bank in 2012 established a workgroup to evaluate options for keeping the shreds out of landfills.

New Orleans was not the first Atlanta Fed office to recycle used money. The Miami Branch cash operation began composting cash shreds in 2012 and diverts nearly 50 tons each month from landfills. The Atlanta Fed's Miami Branch has since switched to a different recycling process that turns the shreds into an energy source. All told, the Atlanta Fed either recycles or otherwise diverts from landfills 76 percent of its waste.



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