

ELLENSBURG CURBSIDE RECYCLING

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Q: Why have recycling rules changed?

- As recycling markets change, the items collected at the curb need to adjust to ensure that all of your recyclables can make it to their next best use. Most household items like bottles, cans, paper and cardboard are still recyclable.
- It has become increasingly important that you ONLY place approved recyclables into your recycling cart. All non-approved items are considered garbage, or contamination. That's according to new guidelines from domestic and international recycling mills.
- For more information about what is recyclable, check the recycling guide on our website: www.wmnorthwest.com/ellensburg. This guide is mailed to all customers annually.
- The biggest change took place at the end of 2018 when glass was removed from the acceptable list of curbside recyclables. Find out more under "Is this Recyclable." Kittitas County also stopped accepting glass as recyclable at the local transfer stations.

Q: How can I tell what is and isn't acceptable in my recycling container?

- Remember these 3 rules to make recycling simple:
 1. Recycle empty plastic bottles, cans, paper and cardboard
 2. Keep foods and liquids out of the recycling
 3. Keep plastic bags out of the recycling bin. No bagged recyclables.
- You should never place an item in your recycling cart if you're not sure it's an approved recyclable. When in doubt – throw it out.
- You can help keep recycling free from contamination by only recycling approved materials. It's easy! Visit our recycling education website www.wmnorthwest.com. Look for Ellensburg in the drop-down menu.

Q: Why did I receive a letter/email about contamination in my recycling and/or yard debris cart?

- Keeping our local recycling healthy requires that everyone put the right materials in the right carts. When garbage ends up in a recycling cart, the result is contamination. Whole truckloads of recycling can end in the landfill as a result. (Example: Liquids or food tossed in the recycling cart degrade paper and cardboard, making them non-recyclable. What a waste!)
- In 2021 WM Smart Truck (sm) Technology hit the street. The new technology incorporates information and communication technologies to enhance service and reduce contamination. External cameras are installed on the collection vehicles. GPS coordinates and links service to the customer's address. The cameras identify the most common service challenges impacting our customers, including broken containers, missed set outs, contamination and overfilled containers. If you received a contamination charge, it is because the WM Smart Truck (sm) Technology identified contamination in your cart.
- When nonrecyclables (contamination) are placed in the recycling, there is a cost to remove these items. Contamination is sorted out by hand at the recycling facility and then disposed of at the landfill.
- Please refer to the recycling guide and www.wmnorthwest.com/ellensburg for the items that may be placed in your recycling cart.
- If you have specific questions about the notice you received or believe it was sent in error, you may contact us at 877-466-4668.
- To receive electronic and more instantaneous notifications, be sure your account is up to date with the correct email and phone number. Go to wm.com to update your account.

Q: Why is there a yellow tag attached to my cart?

- When nonrecyclables (contamination) are placed in the recycling, there is a cost to remove these items. Contamination is sorted out by hand at the recycling facility and then disposed of at the landfill.
- If WM notices nonrecyclables or contamination in your recycle cart your cart may not be emptied and you will receive a yellow "Oops tag" with instructions on what to correct. If a driver notices there was contamination in your cart after it was dumped, external cameras mounted on a truck take photos of the contamination as your cart is emptied. Photos are then reviewed by a Smart Truck team, and you may be directly notified of any issues. If you are notified of recycling contamination more than two times, you may see a contamination

charge on your invoice for each time your recycling is contaminated when emptied.

- Please refer to the recycling guide and www.wmnorthwest.com/ellensburg for the items that may be placed in your recycling cart.
- Our increased efforts in recycling right and reducing contamination is a result of new recycling industry restrictions. It is up to each of us to keep recycling clean and sustainable for years to come!

IS THIS RECYCLABLE?

Glass

Q: Can I recycle glass in the WM's Ellensburg Curbside Recycling Program?

- No, glass is not currently accepted in Ellensburg's curbside recycling.
- Due to low demand for recycled glass in Central and Eastern Washington, glass is currently considered a marginal recyclable material by the Washington Department of Ecology.
- The nearest glass re-manufacturing facility is 6 hours from WM's material recovery facility. As glass is expensive to collect and transport, the negative environmental impacts to transport glass outweigh any benefit of recycling glass.
- After careful evaluation, the Washington Association of Counties Solid Waste Managers recommended removing glass from the list of core recyclables. WM, in collaboration with local jurisdictions, has implemented this recommendation and removed glass from the current list of acceptable recyclables in Ellensburg.
- Recycling is always evolving. Should new opportunities arise to manufacture recycled glass in facilities closer to Ellensburg, we will re-evaluate curbside glass recycling in collaboration with other jurisdictions.

Shredded Paper

Q: Can I recycle shredded paper?

- No, shredded paper is NOT accepted in the City of Ellensburg recycling program.



- Why? Paper consists of fibers. The longer the fiber, the more valuable the paper is during the recycling process. When paper is shredded, the fibers become shorter and must be downcycled into tissue or toilet paper – for which there is much less demand. And tiny pieces of shredded paper can easily cross- contaminate and devalue other recyclables during the sorting process.
- Luckily, there are alternatives for shredded paper. Shredded paper is a great addition to your compost pile if it does not contain cellulose material (like windowed envelopes). Alternatively, it may be bagged and disposed of in your trash.

Bottle Caps & Other Lids

Q: What should I do with bottle caps and other lids?

- Please remove your plastic bottle caps and all other lids before recycling plastic water bottles and other types of plastic containers. Some lids are so small they slip through the cracks of recycling equipment and jam up the machinery. And some plastic caps are made of a different plastic than the bottle – making it difficult to them recycle together. **Please place all caps and lids in the trash.**

Frozen Food Boxes & Other Waxed Cardboards

Q: Can I recycle frozen food boxes and other waxed cardboard?

- No, frozen food boxes, and other items with a similar waxy, water resistant finish, should not be placed in curbside recycling. While they look like other paperboard items such as cereal boxes, they are coated with a thin layer of polyethylene (to protect from freezer burn) that makes them different. If they get processed with the other paperboard products, that paper material can become contaminated by the plastic. Please place them in the trash.

ALL THINGS PLASTIC

Plastics (#1-7) & the Recycling Symbol

Q: What number plastics (#1-7) do you accept? / If something has a recycling symbol can I put it in my cart?

- Recycle plastics by shape, not by number.
- The numbers and Mobius (chasing arrow recycling symbol) on plastics are tricky, because they can mean different things. The Federal Trade Commission

requires that a product have at least 60% access to local programs (like Material Recovery Facility processing) across the U.S. to include the Mobius on their products. However, the Mobius is not a reliable indicator of whether something is accepted in a local recycling program.

- Plus, the number on plastics only indicates the primary plastic ingredient in the recipe. There are thousands of plastic products and packaging, and each has a unique chemical recipe. Many combinations cannot be recycled into new products.
- Those are some reasons we've been looking for a simpler way to promote which materials are recyclable. **One of the easiest methods is to recycle plastics by shape: bottles, jars and jugs. If it's not one of these shapes, it's not accepted in your curbside recycling container.**

Other Plastic Objects (e.g., toys, lawn furniture, kiddie pools, etc.)

Q: What about other plastics like toys, lawn furniture and kiddie pools?

- No, these rigid plastic items (like toys, lawn furniture, kiddie pools, etc.) are not accepted as curbside recycling.
- Not everything that is plastic is recyclable in your curbside cart. The easiest thing to remember with plastics – is to recycle only food and beverage bottle and jugs.
- Just because an item is made from plastic or contains plastic parts, doesn't mean recycling facilities can handle it or that the item can even be recycled.

Plastic Bags

Q: Are plastic bags recyclable? / Why can't I put plastic bags in my recycling cart?

- Plastic bags are NOT accepted as part of our curbside recycling collection program. Plastic bags cause damage to automated recycling equipment – they get caught in processing machinery. Each time plastic bags become tangled in machinery, the entire plant shuts down and our employees manually climb into equipment and cut out plastic bags. Ultimately, plastic bags create a hazard for recycling workers and make recycling plants less efficient – therefore, we cannot accept plastic bags in the recycling.
- However, clean and dry plastic bags can be recycled at many local retailers – just not in your home or business recycling container.
- Visit plasticfilmrecycling.org to find a take-back location near you.

- Plastic bags are not accepted at the curb video - <https://youtu.be/20iOk-YYuB4>

Q: Why can't I place bagged recyclables into my cart/container?

- All your diligent recycling work may be going to waste if you are putting recyclables in plastic bags. Because of health and safety concerns, plastic bags will not be opened, and the materials inside will be sent to the trash.
- Please, **never bag your recycling – keep them loose in your container!**
- For tips on how to collect your recyclables without using plastic liners, please check out this short educational video:
<https://youtu.be/1peXqzvECLQ>

Q: Can I bag my recyclables in clear plastic bags – that way you can see they're recyclables?

- No, all recyclables must go into your cart or container loose. **No bagged recyclables, please!**
- Because of health and safety concerns, plastic bags will not be opened, and the materials inside will be sent to the trash. **Never bag your recycling – keep them loose in your container!**
- **Special note for Commercial Customers:** Please speak with your janitorial team about this topic. Often, they can easily eliminate lining your indoor recycling containers all together. Or, if liners are needed to transport recyclables to the outdoor container, please make sure the bags of recyclables are opened and emptied into the recycling container loose. The used liners can then be reused if they're in good shape or thrown in the trash.