



WENATCHEE CURBSIDE RECYCLING

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Q: Why have recycling rules changed?

- **Glass is no longer accepted in local curbside recycling programs.** Find out more under “Is this Recyclable.”
- 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 plastic 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 latest guidelines from domestic recycling mills.
- For more information about what is recyclable, check the recycling guide on our website: www.wmnorthwest.com/wenatchee. This guide is mailed to all customers annually.

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

- Remember these three 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/wenatchee.



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

- Keeping our local recycling and yard debris programs healthy requires that everyone put the right materials in the right carts. When garbage ends up in a recycling or yard debris cart, the result is contamination. Whole truckloads of recycling and yard debris 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!)
- WM's Smart Truck technology allows us to identify contamination and alert customers, so it doesn't happen again. External cameras mounted on our trucks take photos as drivers empty carts into the truck. When non-recyclable (or non-compostable) materials are found in recycling carts (or yard debris carts), we notify customers. The first notification is a warning. If contamination continues, customers are assessed contamination charges.
- Please refer to the recycling guide and www.wmnorthwest.com/wenatchee 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 509-662-4591.
- 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/wenatchee 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!

Q: What can I do with extra recycling?

- If you have extras that do not fit in your cart with the lid closed, save some for next time. For extra recycling left on top of our outside of your cart you will be charged an [extra charge](#) per equivalent 32-gallon of extras. Put extra recyclables in a clearly labeled kraft paper bag, cardboard box or 32-gallon container with handles and lid. Please label "Recycle." If you frequently have extra recycling, consider requesting another blue recycle cart at a reduced rate.

IS THIS RECYCLABLE?

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

- No, glass is not accepted in curbside recycling.
- Although glass can be recycled, there's no glass remanufacturer in the local area at this time.
- Glass is now considered a marginal recyclable material because there's no stable, long-term demand for glass from Central and Eastern Washington. Instead, glass received at WM's Spokane recyclables sorting facility goes to beneficial use. It is crushed and used as a substitute for road base. There is an oversupply of glass. Recognizing that glass is not actually recycled at this time, WM in collaboration with local jurisdictions is removing glass from the list of acceptable recyclables in this area.
- Glass has been an ongoing challenge for recyclers across the U.S. for a variety of reasons:
 - Recycled glass is in low demand because it can be substituted with an abundant and inexpensive raw resource (sand and silica).
 - The industries that have historically purchased recycled glass include the bottling and insulation industry. Both have decreased their demand due to the availability of inexpensive raw resources and low energy rates. In many cases plastic bottles and aluminum cans have replaced the need for glass bottles which has also caused less demand for glass.



- Glass is heavy and expensive to collect, process and transport. The closest glass remanufacturer is 6 hours away, which would result in significant environmental and monetary costs to transport a heavy material this distance.
- The Washington Association of Counties Solid Waste Managers recommended removing glass from the list of core recyclables. After substantial evaluation, many counties, including Chelan are no longer accepting glass at the curb. Many cities are following suit.

Q: Can I recycle shredded paper?

- No, shredded paper is NOT accepted in the City of Wenatchee recycling program.
- Why? Shredded paper is too small to be sorted and recycled. Any paper item smaller than a postcard is not recyclable.
- 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 garbage.

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 garbage.**

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, are not recyclable. While they look like other paperboard items such as cereal boxes, they are coated with a thin layer of plastic (to protect from freezer burn) that makes them unable to be recycled by paper mills. Please place them in the garbage.



ALL THINGS PLASTIC

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. This symbol typically notes the type of plastic an item is made from, not if the item is recyclable.

There are thousands of plastic products and packaging, and each has a unique chemical recipe. Many combinations cannot be recycled into new products.

- **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 cart.**

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.

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.



- Check out this video to see why plastic bags are not accepted in curbside recycling - <https://youtu.be/20iOk-YYuB4>
- One of the easiest methods to recycle plastics is by shape: bottles, jars and jugs. If it's not one of these shapes, it's not accepted in your curbside recycling container.

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

- 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 disposed of as garbage.
- 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 a clear plastic bag – that way you can see they're recyclable?

- 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 disposed of as garbage. **Never bag your recycling – keep them loose in your container!**

