

ELLENSBURG

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

How Does Recycling Work?

Watch how recycling works: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsfE9ab8lg4>

Q: Where do my recyclables go?

Here is the overview of where your recyclables go:

1. **COLLECTION:** WM collects material from customers.
2. **TRANSFER STATION:** Due to the distance between Ellensburg and the SPOKANE RECYCLE FACILITY, recyclables go to a local sorting facility, part of our local hub and spoke network. Here, some materials, like cardboard and plastics, are segregated to get ready to be shipped off to their next stage. Once enough recyclables are collected, they're loaded into a transfer trailer and taken to a recycling facility.
3. **RECYCLE FACILITY:** WM operates a network of sophisticated recycling facilities where people and technology work together to sort recyclable materials by type (i.e. paper, cardboard, plastic bottles and jugs, etc.). After sorting, materials are baled and ready for the next leg of their journey.
4. **END MARKETS:** Baled recyclables go to "end markets" for reintegration into the supply chain. Here, recyclables are transformed into something new by secondary processors and/or manufacturers. Watch how plastic bottles transform into fiber: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swN29A4fyXo>
5. **THE IMPACT:** This process recovers valuable resources, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and contributes to the circular economy.

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 the drop-down menu.

Contamination

Q: Why did I receive an “oops tag” on my container?

- Recycling drivers are using “oops” tags when the wrong items are placed in the recycling cart.
- These easy-to-understand tags note specific items that should not be placed in the recycling such as garbage bags, food, clothing and foam block/plastic packaging left in cardboard boxes.
- Our increased efforts in recycling right and reducing contamination is a result of manufacturing restrictions. It is up to each of us to keep recycling clean and sustainable for years to come!

Q: Why is there a contamination charge on my bill?

- When nonrecyclables (contamination) are placed in the recycling, there is a cost associated with removing 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 oops tag with instructions on what to correct. If a driver notices there was contamination in your cart after it was dumped, they may leave a tag on your empty cart notifying you of the issue. You may be charged a contamination charge each time your recycling is contaminated when emptied.
- WM uses Smart Truck® technology- to give you a heads up if a container associated with your service address is overloaded or contains non-acceptable material so you can adjust your service levels or usage. These notifications may also inform you of warnings or charges. These truck-mounted cameras have assisted our drivers for nearly a decade. Today, this technology also helps us make your service more efficient and sustainable by keeping an eye out for two obstacles that can slow down service and prevent a second life for your materials: overloaded containers and contamination. Preventing overloaded containers helps keep streets and public areas cleaner, especially in windy conditions.



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- Please refer to the recycling guide and www.wmnorthwest.com/libertylake for the items that may be placed in your recycling cart.

Q: What can I do with extra recycling?

- All recycling must fit in your cart with the lid closed. Extra charges will apply for material left outside or on top of your cart. For occasional extra recycling, use a cardboard box or personal can and label it "Recycle". No plastic bags accepted. Additional recycle carts are also available for an extra charge.

Is this recyclable?

Glass

Q: Can I recycle glass in the WM's Ellensburg 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 removed glass from the list of acceptable recyclables in this area in 2019.
- Glass has been an ongoing challenge for recyclers across the U.S. for a variety of reasons:
 - 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 six hours away, which would result in significant environmental and monetary costs to transport a heavy material this distance.



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- o The Washington Association of Counties Solid Waste Managers recommended removing glass from the list of core recyclables. After substantial evaluation, many counties, including Spokane County are no longer accepting glass at the curb. Many cities are following suit.

Shredded Paper

Q: Can I recycle shredded paper?

- No, shredded paper is NOT accepted in the City of Ellensburg recycling program.
- Why? Shredded paper is too small to be sorted and recycled. Any paper item smaller than a postcard is not recyclable because it falls through the sorting equipment.
- 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 bottles. Some lids are so small they slip through the cracks of recycling equipment. 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?

- 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 trash.



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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. 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.**

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 about plastics – is to recycle plastics by shape: bottles, jars and jugs.
- Just because an item is made from plastic or contains plastic parts, doesn't mean recycling facilities can sort 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 safety hazard for recycling workers and make recycling plants less efficient – therefore, we cannot accept plastic bags in the recycling.



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- Plastic bags are not accepted at the curb video - [Waste Disposal 101: Keep Plastic Bags out of Your Recycling \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1peXqzvECLQ)

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

- All your diligent recycling work may be wasted 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.



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