

LEAVENWORTH CURBSIDE RECYCLING

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Q: Why have recycling rules changed?

- Most recycling rules haven't changed. You can still recycle common household items like plastic bottles, cans, paper and cardboard.
- However, it has become increasingly important that you **ONLY** place approved recyclables into your recycling cart. All non-approved items are contamination. If a load of recycling contains non-recyclables, even by just a fraction – that entire load risks not being recycled. That's according to new guidelines being enforced by domestic and international recycling mills.
- **The big change** is glass is no longer accepted in the local curbside recycling collection program. For more details see the "Is This Recyclable" section of this FAQ.
- You can keep recycling free from contamination by only recycling approved materials. It's easy! Visit our recycling education website www.wmnorthwest.com. Look for Leavenworth in the drop down menu.

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

- We want to make recycling less complicated! 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.
- And remember, 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 website www.wmnorthwest.com for the most up-to-date information. Look for Leavenworth in the drop-down menu.



Contamination

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

- Recycling drivers are using the new yellow “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 new recycling industry 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 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, they may leave a tag on your empty cart notifying you of the issue. If you are notified of recycling contamination more than two times, you may be charged a contamination charge of \$25 each time your recycling is contaminated when emptied.
- Please refer to the recycling guide and www.wmnorthwest.com/leavenworth for the items that may be placed in your recycling cart.

IS THIS RECYCLABLE?

Glass

Q: Can I recycle glass in WM’s Leavenworth Curbside Recycling Program?

- No, glass is not currently accepted in Leavenworth’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 Leavenworth.
- Recycling is always evolving. Should new opportunities arise to manufacture recycled glass in facilities closer to Leavenworth, we will re-evaluate curbside glass recycling in collaboration with other jurisdictions.

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!**

Shredded Paper

Q: Can I recycle shredded paper?

- No, shredded paper is NOT accepted in the City of Leavenworth 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.
- WM's SMaRT facility is not designed to sort shredded paper from other recyclables. Shredded paper makes a mess at the curb and in the sorting facility.
- Luckily, there are alternatives for shredded paper. Shredded paper is a great addition to your home 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.

