



OVER THE FENCEPOST

OFFICE OF COUNTY SUPERVISOR – MARTY NOHE – AUGUST 2019

Recycling in Prince William County

Contamination standards and the closing of the Asian export markets for some plastics has resulted in increased processing cost and limited to non-existent markets for several materials that were required to be recycled in the County. In April, the Prince William County Solid Waste Division revised its requirements for materials that should be recycled. The changes were made to help sustain recycling in our community.

This change affects all recycling containers, including residential curbside recycling bins, blue recycling trailers located throughout the County, recycling bins located at County Landfill and Balls Ford Road Compost Facility and Saturday collection sites provided by the County at Evergreen Fire Station and Nokesville school.

Several items, required in the past to be recycled, **are no longer accepted** because the market demand for these items has diminished substantially, or processing infrastructure in our region is non-existent. The most important changes for Prince William County residents, businesses and refuse haulers are the elimination of glass bottles and jars and elimination of plastic containers, tubs and buckets (usually numbered 3-7) from recycling collection.

The new recycling guidelines information sheet (below) depicts the items that are being recycled. It also features several "wishful recycling" favorites that should not be placed in regular recycling containers. Remember, only recycle materials that are accepted at this time. Placing the wrong items in the recycling container may cause the entire load to be rejected. The Solid Waste Division recently launched a new A to Z Disposal Guide to help residents determine the right way to dispose of numerous household items.

Even though glass and some plastics have been removed from the acceptable list, many other materials remain on the list of items that are required to be recycled. Residents and business should continue to recycle cardboard, paperboard, clean paper, plastic bottles and jugs (#1 and #2) and aluminum and steel cans. To avoid contamination, all materials placed in recycling containers should be empty, clean, dry and loose. **Do not place items in a plastic bag and do not put plastic bags in regular recycling containers for recycling.**

The County now provides purple bins for at the Prince William County Landfill and the Balls Ford Road Compost Facility for residents to deposit glass bottles and jars. This glass will be sent to a glass crusher in Fairfax County and will be used in construction projects. Prince William County resident may also use the glass drop center at the Fairfax County Recycling and Disposal Center which is located at 9850 Furnace Road in Lorton.

In addition to placing only the appropriate items in the recycling container, another important waste management practice is waste reduction. At an April board meeting, in addition to talking about recycling changes and hauler collection challenges, Solid Waste Division Chief Tom Smith shared with County

Supervisors that the landfill receives about 1200 tons of trash daily, and he noted, "The first level of defense is reducing the amount of waste you generate. We want to encourage everyone to reduce the amount of waste generated." Smith recounted a conversation he had about recycling with a resident of the Occoquan District. The resident told Smith, he and his wife stopped using paper plates because they cannot be recycled. They also starting using refillable water bottles and filtered tap water to reduce their use of single-use water bottles. Even though water bottles can still be recycled in Prince William County, limiting the use of them reduces the waste generated and that is even better than recycling. A few other waste reduction and waste management tips that are relatively easy for residents to implement, include: the purchase of items in containers and packaging that can be recycled locally, for example, purchase beverages in cans, which are recycled locally, versus glass bottles; stop junk mail and use reusable shopping bags to reduce waste. The Solid Waste Division continues to work with local trash and recycling collection companies and Material Recovery Facilities/recycling center operators to help communicate changes and best practices for recycling and waste disposal in Prince William County. Residents that have a concern about trash and recycling collection should contact their hauler first. However, if that does not result in an acceptable resolution, there is a Refuse Hauler Complaint form on the Solid Waste Division webpage.

Tips to Rescue Recycling in Prince William County:

- **Don't put glass containers or other glass items in the regular recycling container.** Look for special purple bins at the Prince William County Landfill and Balls Ford Road Compost Facility for glass bottles and jars recycling/repurposing.
- Recycle plastic bottles and jugs (#1 and #2 only); **place all other plastic containers in the trash.**
- Determine the right items to recycle and place them in the recycling container clean, dry and loose.
- **Don't place empty plastic bags or plastic bags with recyclables in regular recycling containers.** Take plastic bags back to grocery stores and other participating retailers to be recycled.
- Use the new A to Z Disposal Guide for information on how to recycle, donate or dispose of items properly in Prince William County.