



Recycling During the COVID-19 Pandemic

What You Need to Know

This fact sheet contains some tips for Marylanders to reduce waste and recycle while staying safe during the pandemic.

Keep Recycling

Generally, recycling services in Maryland are still being provided and you can continue setting your recyclables out at the curb or taking them to drop-off sites as you normally would. Solid waste and recycling services and facilities are considered part of the essential critical infrastructure and are allowed to continue operating during this time. In some limited situations, local governments have made temporary changes to recycling programs or facilities in order to protect public safety during the pandemic. As a result, it is a good idea to check your local government website for any updates, particularly before you visit a drop-off site.

Remember to Recycle Correctly

Many counties have seen increased residential waste as people are sheltering in place, getting more home deliveries, and working and eating at home. Because the generation of waste has shifted from certain offices and businesses to residences, it is especially important for residents to do their part in recycling correctly at home.

The following recycling practices should be remembered. They are especially important to help recyclers and local governments operate successful programs during times of increased demand.

- **Crush or flatten your recyclables when possible.** This is especially important when recycling at drop-off locations. Local drop-off servicing schedules and bin sizes were designed for material loads when people worked outside home. Crushing your materials will extend the amount of recyclables that can be contained without bins overflowing. Make sure to break down cardboard boxes. Do not leave recyclables on the ground outside of bins.
- **Only recyclable materials should go in recycling bins.** Placing non-recyclable wastes in recycling bins can attract pests to drop-off locations. In addition, contaminating recyclable materials with trash can increase risks to recycling personnel, increase processing costs, reduce the price counties get for recyclables, and result in some recyclables being discarded. Plastic bags, lithium batteries, and food do not belong in commingled recycling bins. Always check with your local government to see what materials are accepted in your program.
- **Properly dispose of personal Protective Equipment (PPE).** Keep disinfectant wipes, gloves, masks, and other PPE out of recycling bins. PPE should be placed in a bag that is securely closed and discarded in your trash container.



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- **Confirm proper procedures for dropping off bulky materials.** With many people at home doing spring cleaning or home improvement projects, bulky waste and recyclables are on the increase. Check with your local government on hours, locations, and any safety protocols for dropping off bulky materials for recycling or disposal.

Explore Ways to Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle at Home

Marylanders can and should continue to properly participate in local recycling programs during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there are also ways to reduce, reuse, and recycle more material at home.

- Consider starting a backyard composting bin.
- Leave grass clippings on the lawn when mowing (“grasscycling”).
- Plan your meals, shop, and store food to minimize food waste.
- If you are doing spring cleaning, set aside any items that can be donated once donation sites are open, such as clothing and electronics.

Resources

- [County Contact Information](#)
- [Information on Composting](#)
- [Information of Food Scraps Management and Donation](#)
- [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\) video on recycling during the health crisis](#)
- [EPA’s recycling during COVID-19 web page](#)

Questions

Please contact the Resource Management Program at 410-537-3314.