



# FAQs ABOUT RECYCLING

## ANSWERS TO YOUR FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Though co-mingled recycling simplifies the process, it can still be a little confusing – particularly with recent global changes in the recycling industry. We took note of our customers' most frequently asked questions around recycling and have provided answers here. We hope this will help demystify recycling, explain recent changes, and address your questions and concerns. If you need more information, we are happy to help, please contact us.

### WHICH TYPES OF PLASTICS ARE ACCEPTED?

Due to recent regulation changes by the City of Eugene, fewer plastics are now accepted for recycling. Plastics that are still recyclable include plastic milk jugs and clear plastic drinking bottles. Items that are no longer accepted include plastic tubs, tetra packs, paper milk cartons or juice containers, and aseptic containers such as those used for alternative milks and soup. Find a full list of recyclable items and recycling guidelines at <https://heyapex.com/recycling/>.

### WHY ARE MOST PLASTICS NO LONGER ACCEPTABLE FOR RECYCLING, AND WHO DECIDES?

Apex is a waste hauler, meaning we collect the garbage and recycling from our customers and take it to the transfer station, landfill or recycling processors. Unfortunately, haulers like Apex and consumers like you have no say in what can and cannot be accepted for recycling. Those decisions are made by the City of Eugene and the State of Oregon and are determined by demand in global recycling markets. The recent recycling changes are part of a global recycling crisis and rules are changing all over the world. Previously, the United States' primary customer for recyclable materials was China, but due to several factors, China is no longer purchasing recyclable materials as they have historically, leaving the U.S. and many other countries without a secondary marketplace to send recyclables.

### WILL ALL UNACCEPTED PLASTICS END UP IN THE LANDFILL NOW?

Unfortunately, yes. It's possible that alternatives will be found for processing this type of material, but there is no way to anticipate when that might happen. Some manufacturers, including local companies like Nancy's Yogurt and Mountain Rose Herbs, are responding by changing their packaging to something more sustainable or implementing packaging "take-back" events and reuse programs. Additionally, Lane County Waste Management holds occasional plastics round-up events where a broader range of plastics are accepted.

To keep as much plastic waste as possible from winding up in the landfill, try reducing your consumption of single use plastics, reuse plastic containers, buy in bulk when possible, and finally, watch out for special recycling programs and events. You can also encourage your favorite manufacturers to choose compostable, glass, or more sustainable packaging materials whenever possible. There are several organizations in our community committed to sustainable waste management that can help you reduce, reuse, repair, and recycle. Find more info and additional sustainability resources at <https://heyapex.com/recycling/> or on our Facebook Page [@HeyApex](#).





### **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN UNACCEPTED PLASTICS AND OTHER ITEMS ARE PLACED IN RECYCLING CARTS?**

Unaccepted plastics and other items – such as greasy pizza boxes, improperly rinsed containers, styrofoam, trash, etc. – that are placed in co-mingled recycling carts are referred to as contamination. We know that this usually happens with the best of intentions and people wanting to do the right thing, but contamination can actually result in recyclable items being sent to the landfill. Contamination causes problems for recycling processors when they are sorting and can result in the processor rejecting entire loads of recycling, including the items in the load that are acceptable and properly prepared. For this reason, it is important to familiarize yourself with recycling guidelines, thoroughly clean and rinse items, and refrain from placing soiled or non-recyclable materials in co-mingled recycling carts. We can all do our part to make sure our recycling efforts are as successful as possible. Find helpful recycling and sustainability resources at <https://heyapex.com/recycling/> or on our Facebook Page [@HeyApex](#).

### **WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE PLASTIC WASTE?**

If you are concerned about the amount of plastic waste that is now ending up in the trash in light of recent recycling changes, there are a few steps you can take to reduce your impact. Remember and practice the three other R's – reduce, reuse, and repair – as much as possible and be mindful of how your purchasing decisions affect the amount of waste your household or business produces. There are dozens of ways to do this. For example, you could select products from companies that use recyclable or compostable packaging, buy food in bulk with reusable bags or containers, or make some products (e.g. household cleaners, soap, cheese, bread, etc.) at home from ingredients purchased in bulk.

### **WHY ARE SOME CARDBOARD FOOD CONTAINERS ACCEPTED FOR RECYCLING AND SOME AREN'T?**

Cardboard packaging can be produced using a variety of materials depending on the contents it is designed to contain. Food boxes (e.g. cereal and other dry food boxes) are made out of a type of cardboard called chipboard, sometimes also referred to as grayboard. These may have a "slick" look on the outside of the package, but this is just the printing on the package and it doesn't contain any plastic material. Other types of packaging (e.g. paper milk cartons, juice boxes, to-go coffee cups, ice cream cartons, etc.) have a plastic treatment applied either to the surface of the paper fiber or mixed in with it. This treatment is designed to prevent moisture from seeping through the container. Waxy or plastic coatings are very difficult to separate from paper material, which is why these items are not recyclable. If the container in question contains a slick or waxy coating on the inside, then it goes in the trash. Additionally, cardboard contaminated with food residue (e.g. greasy pizza boxes, soiled takeout containers, etc.) are not recyclable.

### **SINCE FEWER ITEMS ARE RECYCLABLE AND ARE NOW CONSIDERED GARBAGE, WILL I NEED TO PAY FOR A LARGER TRASH CAN OR CAN I PAY LESS FOR MY RECYCLING SERVICE?**

Apex is governed by state ordinances that determine what is trash, what is recyclable, and by City of Eugene ordinances on what rates we can charge our customers for the hauling service we provide. Changes in these ordinances are out of our control, even though they may affect our customers' roll cart capacity needs. We hope you will continue recycling items that are still accepted and encourage you to practice the other three R's – reduce, reuse, and repair – if you are concerned about the volume of trash your household or business disposes of. Each Apex customer is different and, therefore, we leave it up to individual customers to determine if they would like a larger trash can size. If you would like to talk to someone about pricing for alternate levels of service please contact us. We want to ensure you are getting the service that best fits your needs.



### WHAT ARE SOME POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE RECYCLING CRISIS?

The U.S. doesn't currently have the capacity to process all of its recycling waste domestically. Demand will be one of the answers, but it ultimately comes down to everyday consumers making choices to reduce and reuse that forces manufacturers to make packaging changes. Recycling should be our last option with the focus being on reducing, reusing and repairing, first. The best course of action, in our opinion, is to put pressure on manufacturers by "voting with your dollars." Buy items from companies that package and produce their items responsibly and sustainably. Encourage your friends and neighbors to do so as well. Domestic demand for recyclable materials will eventually help recycling markets recover, but it will take habit changes on the part of consumers to make product manufacturers take notice and change their ways to include more long-term and sustainable options.

### ARE YOU DOING ANYTHING TO RESPOND TO THE RECYCLING CRISIS?

Right now, Apex is staying in conversation with DEQ and state leaders to make sure they understand the challenging market conditions we are facing and why. For now, we are focused on helping our customers understand what is recyclable and are doing our best to stop contamination in our current recycling stream. As consumers, if we don't recycle properly, contaminated loads may end up in the landfill whether we like it or not. If there is no viable market for items that could be recycled, then they are considered waste by state law. Our efforts also include establishing community partnerships and providing resources that build awareness and help customers become better informed about sustainable waste management.

### CAN CARDBOARD BE PLACED OUTSIDE OF THE RECYCLING CART?

Yes, you can place flattened cardboard next to your cart as long as pieces are no larger than 3 feet by 3 feet, and the stack is no taller than 2 feet. Pieces larger than this will need to be cut down. There is no additional charge for flattened cardboard recycling placed next to the cart.

### WHAT IF I DON'T NEED WEEKLY RECYCLING PICK-UP?

With the new recycling guidelines, it's possible your cart is not as full as it once was. We offer weekly recycling pickup as an added convenience for our customers and it is included in the overall rate you pay for trash, recycling, and yard debris. If you do not need recycling pick-up in any given week, there's no need to place your cart at the curb. There is no cost difference whether you put your recycling cart out every week or only occasionally.

### IS IT TRUE THAT THE PLASTIC WE THROW AWAY IS ENDING UP IN THE OCEAN?

Unfortunately garbage ending up in the ocean is a complex problem, but is not related to plastics escaping the standard waste management stream. Instead, pollution that ends up in our oceans comes from many sources including illegal dumping and littering, for starters. If you're curious to learn more, <https://www.seeker.com/how-does-your-plastic-bag-get-into-the-ocean-1770421817.html> is a good article that helps explain the bigger picture.

### WHAT HAPPENS TO RECYCLED GLASS? I'VE HEARD IT JUST ENDS UP IN THE LANDFILL.

The glass we collect curbside actually **does** get recycled.

Once we pick it up, we take it to a carrier who then transports it to Glass 2 Glass, LLC in Portland. They separate colors and reuse the material for new glass containers.