



Rushern L. Baker, III
County Executive

THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Department of the Environment



Adam Ortiz
Director

June 17, 2015

Dear Municipal Recyclers:

Thank you for the tremendous job you and your communities are doing to preserve valuable resources by recycling. Due to your efforts, Prince George's County has achieved a recycling rate of 59.53 percent and a waste diversion rate of 64.53 percent. No program is successful without the support of the community, and your continued support is vital to the ongoing success of the Prince George's County Curbside Residential Single-Stream Recycling Program.

Currently, plastic bags and plastic wrap are being accepted at the County's Material Recycling Facility (MRF). However, starting July 1, 2015, the County will no longer accept plastic bags or plastic film in its Residential Curbside Recycling Single-Stream Program. Residents who receive County recycling pick-up services were notified of this change via a post card mailing and other sources of notification last month.

In an effort to maximize recycling, the County began accepting disposable plastic grocery store and retail shopping bags and plastic film within its Curbside Residential Single-Stream Recycling Program. Initially, some of the bags were captured and sold to recycling vendors to make lumber-like material and benches. However, vendors will no longer purchase the bags from the County's recycling program because the bags become contaminated when mixed with the other recyclables.

In addition, the equipment at the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) is not designed to remove plastic bags. Consequently, sorting the bags has become a manual process and many bags still get through to the automated sorting system causing serious mechanical problems. The plastic bags and plastic wrap become entangled in the equipment causing jams and system wide shut downs and thousands of dollars in repairs.

Municipal Recyclers

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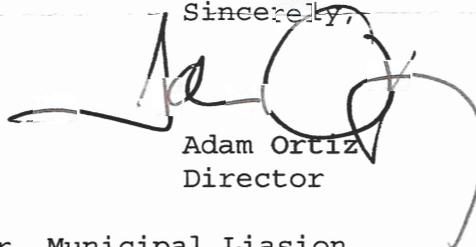
Rather than continue the practice of accepting plastic bags and plastic wrap in the Residential Curbside Single-Stream Recycling Program, the County will develop an educational outreach campaign to notify the public of recycling and reuse alternatives. One alternative is to take plastic bags to local grocery stores or retailers with a plastic bag recycling program. Many plastic bags are printed with source reduction tips and messages encouraging reuse or recycling with the originating retailer. Most grocery stores have recycling collection boxes located in their main entrances. Thus, the bags can remain clean and be recycled once they are taken back to the stores.

We also encourage residents to use reusable bags when shopping to avoid the use of plastic altogether. Reusable bags are sturdier than plastic bags and can be used for a longer period of time. Additionally, most reusable bags can be machine washed to eliminate dirt and contaminants.

Our goal is to reinforce this message to as many County citizens and residents as possible; therefore, your assistance in disseminating the information is key. I have included a frequently asked questions document that addresses some of the concerns your residents may have regarding the new policy. If you would like to receive an electronic copy, please contact Linda Lowe via email at lm Lowe@co.pg.md.us.

Thanks in advance for your continued cooperation and commitment to protecting and preserving the environment through recycling. Please feel free to contact me or Roger E. Merritt, Associate Director, Waste Management Division, at (301) 952-7625 should you need additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Ortiz', with a large circular flourish at the end.

Adam Ortiz
Director

cc: Beatrice P. Tignor, Municipal Liasion
Office of the County Executive



Rushern L. Baker, III
County Executive



PLASTIC DISPOSABLE BAGS AND PLASTIC FILM (stretch film)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Prince George's County is #1 in Maryland for waste diversion and #2 for recycling and it's time we take the next step!



Why is the County no longer accepting single-use plastic bags in the Single-Stream Recycling Program?

Starting July 1, 2015, plastic bags of any color, size or shape and plastic film WILL NO longer be accepted in the Prince George's County Residential Curbside Single-Stream Recycling Program. The plastic bags and plastic film that are currently placed into the single-stream recycling program are NOT being recycled and end up as landfill waste. The County strongly encourages residents to use reusable bags in lieu of using plastic bags.

The County will no longer accept the plastic bags/film because there is not an end market for the material after it has been collected in a single-stream recycling collection program/process. The plastic bags/film become dirty and contaminated once they are mixed with other recyclables, reducing their quality and value to manufacturers who use and purchase the plastic bags/film for making recycled products such as plastic lumber.

Additionally, the County's Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) uses an automated system that sorts and bales the recyclables and is not designed or engineered to process plastic bags/film. The bags/film jam and clog the machinery causing costly damages and equipment downtime, contributing to high labor costs. Health risks are also placed on the assembly line workers (sorters) when they remove the plastic bags from the recyclable material as the bags could contain dangerous items (hypodermic needles, medical waste, sharp objects) placing the sorters at risk for injury.

What types of plastic bags/film are considered unacceptable in the County's Residential Curbside Single-Stream Program?

The items contained in the list below WILL NO longer be accepted in the Residential Curbside Single-Stream Recycling Program:

Here's what NOT to recycle ►



Any grocery, retail or trash plastic bag

Bread bags

Dry cleaning bags

Fruit and vegetable bags (fresh/frozen)

Garden product bags (soil/mulch)

Newspaper bags

Outer wrap from paper towel, napkin and diaper packages

Outer wrap from cases of soda, juice and snacks

Zipper or stand-up pouches, bubble or cling wrap

Crinkle bags for cereal, pasta or snack bags

Outer wrap from meat or cheese products

I notice the ban includes bags for vegetables, newspaper sleeves, dry-cleaning bags and outer wrap from meat and cheese products. Why are they also banned?

These items are banned because they also pose a problem with the sorting process. For more information on unacceptable items, [click here](#) or visit our website at environment.mypgc.us.

Can black, dark green or any other color of large plastic bags be placed in the recycling cart or bin? Can these bags be used for recycling?

No, these types of bags are not accepted in the County's Residential Curbside Single-Stream Recycling Program and are not an acceptable item to place or use to line the recycling collection container.

What will happen if I put plastic bags in my recycling cart after the ban takes place?

After July 1, 2015, the recycling contractors WILL NOT empty recycling carts or bins that contain plastic bags or plastic film and will tag unacceptable containers with a sticker. We encourage residents to comply with the ban to keep the County moving forward with its recycling and waste diversion goals.

Are the clear/translucent recycling container liners acceptable?

Large clear/translucent plastic liner bags may still be used for recyclable materials as long as no other plastic bags or plastic film/stretch film is contained within the liner bag. If recycling is prepared properly by rinsing all beverage containers, bottles and cans clean before placing in recycling cart/bin, you can eliminate the need to purchase liner bags. REMEMBER – even clear plastic liners are NOT recyclable when mixed with your recycling.

Can the large paper yard bags used for yard waste collection, be used as a collection container/liner for the recycling cart/bin?

No. The recycling hauler may mistake the large paper yard bags as containing yard waste and leave the material at the curb.

Where can I recycle plastic bags?

Return to sender! Most local grocery stores and other retailers have plastic bag recycling collection programs and have placed collection boxes in their stores that are usually located at or near a store's main entrance. [Click here](#) to find drop-off locations in your area or visit <http://plasticfilmrecycling.org>.

What types of plastic bags should I recycle at stores?

Most clean and dry plastic bags are 100 percent recyclable at participating retail and local drop-off locations. These bags are usually designated with the three recycling arrows and are made of vinyl or poly vinyl chloride (PVC).

What happens to bags after they are recycled properly?

Plastic bags are recycled into many different products. Most plastic bags are turned into composite lumber. They can also be reprocessed and turned into small pellets used to make new bags, pallets, containers, crates and pipe.

Where can I get reusable shopping bags?

Most grocery, pharmacy and other retailers sell reusable bags for a nominal fee. You can help the environment by using and purchasing reusable bags when shopping or opting for paper bags where available.

Should I recycle degradable bags?

No. Biodegradable/compostable bags should not be placed in the County's Residential Curbside Single-Stream Recycling Program because these types of bags are made from a different type of material, break down over time and are not acceptable for recycling purposes.

Who do I contact for more information on the county's residential curbside single-stream recycling program?

To submit a service request for more information on recycling programs, please contact CountyClick at 3-1-1 or submit a request for assistance online at www.countyclick311.com.