Multi-Family Valet Recycling: It’s in the Bag

Washington State Recycling Association Conference
May 16, 2016
Questions to Be Answered:

1. How does valet door-step service solve major garbage/recycling issues in multi-family complexes?
2. How does valet service work?
3. Why can’t there be an alternative to plastic bags?
4. How should Recycling Coordinators/Educators interface?
5. Does recycling education work with valet service?
IMPORTANT NOTES!

1. NOT a sales pitch for multi-family valet garbage & recycling service

2. NOT suggesting plastic bags for all recycling – only for very specific circumstances

3. Intent is how to educate residents in complexes with valet service in order to increase both the quality and quantity of recycling
Jeanette Brizendine

CITY OF Federal Way

• Solid Waste & Recycling Project Manager Since 2007
• 16,000+ Multi-Family Units in Federal Way
• Estimated 1,300 Hours on Multi-Family Recycling Outreach
• Handed Out 15,000 Multi-Family Tote Bags
• WSRA Executive Director’s Award (2010), Individual Recycler of the Year (2013) & Public Agency Recycler of the Year (2015)
FW’s Plastic Bags Education

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**DON’T LET YOUR RECYCLING EFFORTS GO TO “WASTE”!**

When recycling is sorted, full bags look like garbage and are thrown away.

Plastic garbage bags are NOT allowed in your recycling cart, so always empty out any bags before you recycle.

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**FEDERAL WAY MIRROR**

Keep plastic bags out of curbside recycling

by Loretta Ash, North Federal Way Recycles
April 15, 2016

Don’t put plastic bags in your curb-side recycling container! Yes, you read that correctly. Please do not put any plastic bags in your curbside recycling container even though some of them have been recycled before.

Your recyclables go to a facility that uses conveyor belts and screens to separate the materials. Plastic bags get caught in the sorting machines and block the entire sorting process. Plastic bags can block the entire sorting process! At least twice a day, the entire sorting facility stops operating, so the plastic bags can be removed from the system for hand sorting.

So what should you do with plastic bags? Please throw them in your garbage or if you have a second bag, store it in your garage or house. You can also return them to plastic bags at grocery stores.

**Recycling Green Review**

August 2014

If you are trying to recycle plastic bags, empty the items before they are sent to the recycling facility. Return plastic bags to the store. Many stores will then save you money on your plastic bag fee.

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**Federal Way MIRROR**

Recycling Review

August 2014

**WHAT’S INSIDE**

*How ‘Safe’ Are Your Cleaners & Cosmetics?*

*Recycling Open at New Lake Tapps Station*

*Reducing Risk of Stuff*

*Free Recycling*

*Mattresses, Microphones, and More!*

*Sign Up to Be a Recycling Ambassador*

*Recycling Guide*

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**No Plastic in Recycling**

Don’t put plastic bags in your recycling container because they look like garbage and are thrown away.

Plastic garbage bags are NOT allowed in your recycling cart, so always empty out any trash before you recycle.

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**FREE Tote Bags for Recycling**

Use the Federal Way MIRROR to find the City of Federal Way Recycling Drop-off Centers.

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**FREE ISABLE SHOPPING BAG**

Present this coupon to any participating store and receive a FREE shopping bag. Each store will have a different ISABLE bag. The bags are designed to be used by people with disabilities.

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**PLASTIC BAGS NOT ACCEPTED IN CURBSIDE RECYCLING**

*Plastic bags are not accepted in curbside recycling. Let’s keep our recycling system cleaner.*

*If you collect recyclables in plastic bags, please empty them into your recycling cart or the recycling facility will not be able to recycle.*


*Please use cloth bags when possible. Even better, durable cloth bags instead! (Leaving a bag seven times as much energy as recycling it!)*

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**When in Doubt, Check It Out**

Visit online to learn more about recycling.

www.fwmc.org
Residents are Still Using Bags

- Door-to-Door Education
- Recycling Flyers
- Recycling Tote Bags
- Enclosure Signage
Material Management Issues in Multi-Family

- Overflowing Containers
- Garbage on Ground
- Bulky Materials
- Illegal Dumping
More Material Management Issues in Multi-Family

- Unsightly Containers
- Maintenance Staff Time
- Limited Space Available
Trends in Existing and New Multi-Family Developments

- Single Compactor
- No Tow-Carts
- Small Recycling Area
A Solution for Apartments!

- Door-step Garbage and Recycling Service aka "Valet Service"
- Federal Way serviced by Valet Waste
About Valet Waste

• Door-step Garbage and Recycling Collection
• Largest Company in this Industry
• Established in 1995
• Operates in 34 states
• Serving over 800,000 Units Nationwide
How Does Valet Service Work?

• Starts at 8 PM, Sunday – Thursday
• Collection of recycling and garbage at every unit
• Bags must be tied and placed in provided containers on porch
• Document incorrect set-outs and report to property
• Recycling is quickly screened
• Must finish as quickly as possible as compactor noise may cause complaints at night
## Why Plastic Bags?

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<th>Time Needed for Handling</th>
<th>Spill Risk</th>
<th>Increased Cost</th>
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*Pilots performed by Valet Waste using alternates to plastic bags, but none were deemed successful*
Valet Collection

- 29 part time staff collects nightly at 8,700 units (different 18 properties)
- Material is grabbed off porches and carried to truck
- Truck is driven from building to building
- When full, go to compactor/recycling area for sorting
- Very fast-paced
When in Doubt, Throw It Out

• Recycling collected at night, typically dark
• Material is screened very quickly
• Material is recycled ONLY if clearly visible as recycling
  o If bag is not clear/blue, then thrown away
  o If any contamination is seen, then thrown away
Financial Details

• 1, 3 and 5 year contracts available
• Phased-in billing based on new and renewed leases
• Flat fee per unit for collection
• Property typically passes through collection and disposal costs to residents
Properties Are Signing Up!

- Amenity for Residents
- Increases Retention through Customer Service
- Cleans up Property
- One Garbage & Recycling Enclosure
- Frees up Maintenance Staff Time
- Decreases Illegal Dumping
Growing Trend in Multi-Family

Annual Garbage & Recycling Tonnage

- Red: Garbage from Valet Complexes
- Blue: Recycling from All Complexes
- Green: Garbage from Non-Valet Complexes
Impact of Valet on Operations

- Recycling Already in Plastic Bags
- Central Containers Instead of Around Property
- Typically Cleaner Recycling
- Decreased Recycling & Increased Garbage
- Hauler & City Rarely Aware of Conversion to Valet Service
Decreased Contamination

Regular Recycling

Valet Recycling
If Recycling is Left in Place...

- Recycling will typically be more contaminated due to self-hauling
Garbage Tonnage in Transition to Valet Service

Tons of Garbage per Year

- Argyle Apartments
- Glen Park
- Park at Dash Point
- The Commons
- The Pavilion
- The Reserve Apartments
Material Recovery Facility

2015 JMK MRF Tonnages by Material Type

- Paper & Newspaper: 51%
- Cardboard: 23%
- Metal: 11%
- Glass: 6%
- Plastic: 3%
- Residue: 6%
- Plastic Film: 0.1%
Problematic Materials at the MRF
**Current Plastic Bag Exceptions**

Many recycling programs allow **bagged bags** and **bagged shred** in commercial streams.

**NOTE:** Federal Way’s contract does not specifically ban the use of plastic bags for recycling *(nor does it mention anywhere that it is allowed)*
Affect of Valet Recycling

**HAPPY**
- Property Managers
- Maintenance Staff
- Residents
- Valet Providers

**INDIFFERENT**
- Recycling Drivers
- MRFs

**NOT HAPPY**
- Recycling Coordinators
So, What Do Recycling Coordinators/Educators Do?

- Refuse to allow plastic bags and get very little recycling
- Ignore properties with valet service because you don’t know what to do
- Allow plastic bags under special circumstances for the greater good of recycling
Valet Recycling Education Pilot

- Glen Park Apartments
- 464 Units
- Previously had Tow-Carts and Recycling Carts
- Converted to Central Compactor and Recycling
Pre-Education Evaluation

Containers Monitored on Monday Mornings

- Contents Photographed
- Noted Fullness and Level of Contamination

- *Valet Service:* Sundays – Thursdays
- *Containers Emptied:* Wednesdays
Pre-Education Photos
Pre-Education Results

- Valet Recycling Service Not Utilized
- Recycling Containers Barely Used
- Some Contamination, but Relatively Minimal
Education Mailed to Residents

Use clear or blue bags for recycling. Normally recycling shouldn't be bagged as it causes issues at the recycling sorting facility, but an exception will be made for this service. If recycling is in a bag that can't be seen through, then the workers assume it is garbage. Please double bag heavy items such as glass.

Carry Out Garbage and Recycling: You are welcome to carry out your garbage and recycling to the compactor and recycling area in the center of the property.
Post-Outreach: Week 1

- (2) 4-yd Steel & (8) 96-gal Carts, 1x/wk = 12 yds/wk
Post-Outreach: Week 2

- (2) 4-yd Steel & (8) 96-gal Carts, 2x/wk = 24 yds/wk
Post-Outreach: Week 3

- (4) 4-yd Steel, 2x/wk = 32 yds/wk
Post-Outreach: Week 4

- (5) 4-yd Steel, 2x/wk = 40 yds/wk
Post-Outreach: Week 5

• (6) 4-yd Steel, 2x/wk = 48 yds/wk
Post-Outreach: Week 6

- (6) 4-yd Steel, 3x/wk = 72 yds/wk
Monthly Tonnage

Garbage

Recycling (estimated from container volume)

~27% Recycling Rate

~9% Recycling Rate

Monthly Tons

Successful Education

- Education had a HUGE impact on the level of recycling
- Still some contamination, but relatively minimal
Notes

• 5 recycling service level increases required in pilot
• Important to do site visits to monitor volumes
• When recycling containers overflow, it attracts garbage and bulky items too
Tips for Increasing Recycling at Properties with Valet

1. **ACCEPT THE USE OF CLEAR PLASTIC BAGS FOR VALET RECYCLING!**
2. Befriend Valet Waste & Property Management Staff
3. Centralize Recycling Containers
4. Ensure Adequate Recycling Capacity
5. Mail Educational Materials
6. On-site Monitoring
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