

New Automated Recycling Pilot Program: Frequently Asked Questions

Effective mid-March 2009, approximately 10,000 Houston residents will be able to participate in a new Automated Recycling Pilot Program. Here are some common questions we anticipate regarding this new service. If you do not find an answer to your question here, please contact 3-1-1 or visit www.houstonsolidwaste.org.

Why is this new recycling program being implemented?

Houston residents currently utilize what is commonly referred to as “single-stream” recycling. This type of recycling allows customers to mix recyclable paper, corrugated cardboard, plastic and aluminum cans in one container. Customers will still be able to commingle recyclables, however, collection will change from manual bin collection to an automated cart-based collection. In addition, we will now accept glass bottles and jars. Automated collection reduces costs because collection routes are serviced more efficiently and worker injuries decrease.

How often will recycling be collected?

Collection will be bi-weekly, just like the current 18-gallon green bin system.

What do I have to do?

You will be provided a 96-gallon green automated cart for your recyclables. We are requesting that you use these carts to recycle. These carts are much larger than the previous recycling bins and will allow residents to dispose of five times more recycling material than the 18-gallon bins. Also, the carts roll easily to the curb and have a lid to contain items and keep them from getting wet.

What items can go in the cart?

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|-------------|--|
| *Newspaper | *Plastic containers 1 through 5 and 7 (rinsed and drained) |
| *Magazines | *Aluminum and tin cans (rinsed and drained) |
| *Catalogs | *Cardboard (flattened) |
| *Phonebooks | *Glass bottles, jugs and jars (rinsed and drained) |

A list of the items that can go in the cart is printed on the cart lid for your convenience. This new service will allow you to recycle glass, which was not previously collected curbside.

What about used motor oil?

Used oil will be collected; however, it must be placed outside the recycling cart in a screw top, non-chemical container. The container can be one gallon maximum. Due to the limited space on the collection vehicle, please limit your quantities to no more than three containers per household.

What items cannot go in the cart?

Please remember this is NOT a trash can. No garbage, yard trimmings, trash, food or hazardous waste should be placed in the cart. No plastic bags, meat trays, pizza boxes, styrofoam or broken glass can be accepted because of contamination. Only those items indicated on the cart lid are acceptable.

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Why can't I place plastic bags in the cart for collection?

Plastic bags jam the automated machinery at the processing facility. Residents can take their plastic bags to some grocery stores or other local stores and place them in their containers for recycling. The Westpark Consumer Recycling Center located at 5900 Westpark also accepts clean, litter free plastic grocery and film bags.

What if my paper gets wet since it's commingled with other items?

We do ask that you empty and rinse all your containers to keep food contamination out of your bin. A minimum amount of moisture will not ruin the paper. Quality control audits will be conducted to keep down levels of contamination. Those found to place large amounts of unacceptable material in their individual carts run the risk of having the carts removed.

Can I get more than one cart?

Since this is a pilot program, only one cart will be issued per household. Please note each cart will have a serial number and assigned to an individual address.

What if my cart is lost or stolen?

A police report must be filed in order to obtain a replacement cart.

Is there a fee to participate in the program?

This is a pilot program initiated by the City of Houston. There is no fee to participate, however, audits will be conducted to determine participation rates of individual neighborhoods. Carts not being used for recycling will be collected by Solid Waste Management personnel.

What are some of the anticipated advantages of this new pilot recycling program?

- *The program makes it easier for residents to recycle; thereby increasing recycling and helping the City divert waste from landfills.
- *Collection costs are reduced because collection is automated.
- *Collection routes are serviced more efficiently.
- *Worker injuries are expected to decrease because of automated collection.
- *Glass will be collected.

What are some of the anticipated disadvantages of this new program?

The larger bin may encourage residents to put everything that *seems* recyclable in it. This is why we need your help in remembering that this is not a trashcan. Customers must be conscientious recyclers to make the program a success.

Where can I go for more info?

You can call 3-1-1 or visit our website at www.houstonsolidwaste.org.

THANKS FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!