FAQs: Kerbside recycling collections transitioning through COVID-19 National Alert Levels

Updated Wednesday 13 May 2020

The Government announced on Monday 11 May to move to Alert Level 2 on Thursday 14 May.

Kerbside recycling collections started Tuesday 12 May.

Important note about collection days:
As collections resumed on Tuesday 12 May, those who were to have collections on Monday 11 May will have theirs collected on Saturday 16 May. This is a similar approach to what we do for Christmas and New Year.

See wellington.govt.nz/collectionday for information on collection days. This link will also give you options to download the recycling calendar that relates to your area.

During this busy time, we recommend putting out your recycling the night before as collections are starting earlier than usual.

Frequently asked questions:

Q: Do I have to use my official receptacles for rubbish – green crates, recycling bags or wheelie bin?
A: Yes – these are designed with health and safety in mind. If they are not in official receptacles (green crate, recycling bag or wheelie bin), then it puts our collectors at risk as they will not be able to check the contents of bags before picking them up.

We will NOT be collecting any recycling in unofficial bags, crates, boxes or bins.

If you don’t have any recycling bags left, unfortunately you will have to hold on to your recycling or put it in your WCC yellow rubbish bags.

The annual distribution of recycling bags has begun, but is expected to take up to 6 weeks.

Recycling bags and glass crates can be bought at the Service Centre on Manners Street when it reopens on Monday 18 May, and these local libraries when they reopen: Tawa, Johnsonville, Newtown and Kilbirnie. Please note that limits on purchasing these items will apply.

There is a limit of 2 glass crates per household.

Q: When does the annual delivery of recycling bags begin?
A: We have resumed the delivery of the annual distribution of recycling bags. These will only be distributed to those who are due to receive them – we cannot facilitate delivery of bags to wheelie bin addresses.

The distribution normally takes place over 6 weeks, so please bear with us as we work through our normal delivery schedule.
Recycling bags and glass crates can be bought at the Service Centre on Manners Street when it reopens on Monday 18 May, and these local libraries when they reopen: Tawa, Johnsonville, Newtown and Kilbirnie. Please note that limits on purchasing these items will apply.

Q: Why aren't yellow bags free?

A: The Southern Landfill and rubbish and recycling kerbside collections are paid for by Landfill fees and the purchase of yellow rubbish bags – it is not paid for by rates. We need to keep these costs in place to maintain these essential services.

Q: Can I put all my recycling out on the first day of kerbside collection?

A: Please put your recycling out on your usual collection day, in line with the street directory calendar. If you have a lot of recycling, putting it out in stages will help us to manage volumes, both in the collections as well as at the sorting facility.

See wellington.govt.nz/collectionday for information on collection days. This link will also give you options to download the recycling calendar that relates to your area.

For example if Tuesday 12 May would normally be the week you put glass out, please only put glass out. The alternate week recyclables will not be collected.

Q: What goes to landfill and what goes to the recycling sorting facility?

A: We will deliver as much as we can to the recycling sorting facility. But when items are contaminated they cannot be sorted, therefore these will need to go to the landfill.

If there is more than 15 per cent of contaminated material in the recycling stream, it cannot be processed through the facility as the quality of the product will be too poor to attract any buyers. We don’t want that to happen so we need everyone to make a big effort to ensure only clean cardboard, paper, tin and aluminium cans, glass bottles, and rigid plastic bottles and containers marked with numbers go into your recycling.

In addition to this, if we receive too much stockpiled recycling and we cannot sort it in time, this becomes a health hazard. Therefore this is when we will make a call to send some material to the landfill.

Our goal is to see as much recycled as possible, but our ability to achieve that relies on everyone playing their part – so make sure it’s clean, and where possible, put it out in stages.

Q: Will my stockpiled recycling actually be recycled?

A: It is possible that a lot of recycling will be contaminated with food residue, particularly if it has been held for more than a month. Where this is the case, it may be landfilled.

We expect the focus to be initially on high value recyclables such as cardboard, high value plastic (clear PET 1), and glass. Whilst we will be working hard to make sure that as much as possible is recycled, it is likely that some recycling will be landfilled.

Cardboard: Neatly bundled or stacked cardboard will be collected next to a wheelie bin or bag on co-mingled recycling collection day – not glass collection day. EnviroWaste will be running an additional truck to sweep through and pick up large amounts of bundled
cardboard. The bundled cardboard may not be picked up initially with the main collection but will be later that day. Please bear with us as collections will take longer than normal.

Q: If I haven’t had my recycling bags delivered, what should I do?

A: Recycling bag deliveries have started. Please note the delivery schedule runs across 6 weeks, so please bear with us. Our normal process of missed bag deliveries applies – please wait until the end of June before you contact us about missed deliveries.

If you have been missed, we will arrange for delivery of the bags. If you have run out, recycling bags and glass crates can be bought at the Service Centre on Manners Street when it reopens on Monday 18 May, and these local libraries when they reopen: Tawa, Johnsonville, Newtown and Kilbirnie. Please note that limits on purchasing these items will apply.

See wellington.govt.nz/rubbishandrecycling for more information.

Q: I want to request a wheelie bin or green glass crate – can I do this now?

A: You can request a wheelie bin assessment by calling 04 499 4444. You can get a replacement recycling wheelie bin and clip if yours is lost or stolen. There is a service fee that covers the costs of replacing and delivering the bins.

Glass crates can be purchased from the Service Centre when it reopens on Monday 18 May. Please note that only one crate per household will be able to be purchased at this time.

More information can be found at wellington.govt.nz/rubbishandrecycling.

Q: Can I put glass in other containers as my green crate is full?

A: No, the WCC green crate is designed specifically to hold a certain weight for the health and safety of our recycling collectors. Any other crates may be too heavy, not have handles, or in the case of cardboard, may break and cause a hazard with broken glass.

For added safety of the collectors, please only fill your glass crate to the level of the lip, any backlog will be cleared in subsequent collections.

Q: What is WCC planning to do differently in the future to be prepared for a pandemic?

A: Our approach has followed the WCC’s pandemic plan with regards to recycling. It would be our intention, in the event of a future pandemic, to once again follow the guidelines in the plan and advice from the Ministry of Health.