



UPDATE APRIL 7, 2020: YARD WASTE PICK UP WILL RESUME

To All Residents:

On March 13, 2020, the President issued a COVID-19 Emergency Declaration which identified solid waste collectors as “Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers.” In addition, Virginia Governor Northam has declared a state of emergency for Virginia.

Our solid waste employees play a critical role in ensuring the health and safety of our community as they move from house to house to collect, transport and dispose of waste. Due to the nature of their duties, our workforce is unable to wear most of the protective equipment that other essential employees are required wear to protect their health and the health of others. They are unable, in many cases, to follow the social distancing guidelines due to the requirement that they occupy the same vehicle and work side-by-side to collect solid waste.

As a result of these facts, it has become necessary to make additional changes to our collection services, effective Monday, April 6th, and effective April 13 for yard waste:

- All trash or recycling must be containerized to avoid risk to the employees. Residents who have extra trash or recyclables that do not fit into their containers must be kept until the next collection day. No bagged or loose trash/recycling placed next to the containers will be collected.
- **Yard waste will now be collected every Monday at curbside to coincide with the county by-laws:**
 - 3 bag per household limit
 - All material must be in paper bags.....NO Plastic will be collected
 - No bundles or piles will be collected

Due to COVID-19, there has been a significant increase in trash, recycling, and yard waste because households are full of students and teleworking adults and spring weather has arrived. In addition, far fewer families are obtaining their meals from outside of the home which results in an even larger volume of trash and recycling. To make matters worse, this additional volume of trash and recycling is straining the solid waste collection system at a time when there are fewer workers available to collect, transport, and process the material.

Solid waste programs throughout the state and the nation are facing higher absenteeism due to the disruption caused by the coronavirus. Trash and recycling collection workers face the same challenges as everyone else, such as finding childcare and addressing family health concerns. This has caused a significant shortage of trained personnel to cover all the normal functions of solid waste programs. The remaining workforce is being deployed to provide only essential sanitation services – weekly trash collection, which can attract vermin and be a vector for disease if left uncollected. Yard waste collection is not essential to preserving public health.

We encourage you to keep your yard waste to a minimum by practicing grasscycling (leaving mowed grass clippings on the lawn), backyard composting, or not generating yard waste at all, if possible. Studies indicate that grasscycling is beneficial to both the lawn and the soil.

It is virtually impossible for those in the solid waste industry to obtain a sufficient amount of PPE (personal protective equipment) for its workforce. Even if we were able to secure PPE for our employees, face masks and latex gloves are neither practical nor durable enough to withstand the amount of movement required to collect trash and the perspiration that results from that movement. On average, each of our workers RUNS an average of 3 miles each day and handles more than 1,000 items (bags, containers, etc.) during the performance of their duties. And while we are attempting to provide our employees with hand sanitizer, even this has become impossible to obtain in sufficient quantity for our entire workforce.

In addition to the lack of our ability to obtain and use PPE, it is also impossible to collect solid waste while complying with the recommended social distancing guidelines. While we do have several side-load vehicles in our fleet which are fully automated and require only one employee to operate, the majority of our workforce are using rear-load vehicles, which require two employees to ride together and work side-by-side throughout the day. And some of them have 3 people.

Overall, we urge residents to follow these guidelines to assist us with keeping our workforce healthy so that additional reductions in services can be avoided:

1. Reduce the generation of waste to ease the strain on the system. (Postpone spring cleaning.)
2. Wipe and disinfect cart handles and lids.
3. Stop setting out yard waste at the curb; implement mulching or composting.
4. Seal sharp medical objects in a rigid plastic container with sturdy tape and label it "sharps."
5. Bag all trash to limit workers' exposure to harmful materials.

It is our sincere hope that the threat posed by the COVID-19 virus will lessen soon so that we can all resume our normal lives. It is imperative that we continue to support one another until then and work together to maintain the essential services that will protect us all from further harm.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding. If you have any questions concerning this notification, please contact us at (703) 257-7100 or by email at customerservice@patriotdisposalservices.com.

Thank you,

Patriot Disposal, Inc.