

RECYCLING CHANGES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)/TALKING POINTS

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE RECYCLING MARKETS?

Recycling markets are volatile by nature and this has been one of the more turbulent stretches in recent history. Recyclable material is a commodity and like any commodity, it experiences fluctuations in supply and demand.

WHAT IS THE ‘CHINA FACTOR?’

At the start of 2018, China imposed restrictions on recycling loads shipped from the United States. The reason for this action was excessive contamination, including garbage, plastic bags, food debris, unacceptable plastics and waxed cardboard.

WHAT OTHER FACTORS ARE AFFECTING THE RECYCLING MARKETS?

The prices for all materials, especially residential mixed paper, have dropped over 50%. Even so, our contracted partner, Casella Recycling, has done a tremendous job in shipping all of our materials domestically despite these significant price drops.

WHAT KIND OF CHANGES ARE THERE IN TOMPKINS COUNTY?

Due to limited or no market outlets for certain plastics, we’ve had no choice but to remove them from our list of acceptable items. We are limiting acceptable curbside plastic containers to #'s 1, 2 and 5 (water & soda bottles, milk jugs, tubs, carry-out and berry containers, etc.).

The following list of rigid plastic items are accepted at the Recycling and Solid Waste Center:

Plastic Baskets and Buckets (Clean)

Plastic Garbage Cans or Recycling Carts (Wheels and axles removed)

Coroplast Campaign Signs (Metal removed)

Plastic Crates

Plastic Drums & Totes (Cut in half)

Plastic Lawn Furniture

Plastic Pet Carriers (Metal removed)

Plastic Shelving

Plastic Bottles from Water Coolers

Plastic bags and films have never been allowed at the curb, but can be brought to the RSWC. The list of acceptable plastic bags and films include:

Flexible 6-pack rings

Plastic grocery bags (Clean and dry)

Plastic retail bags (Clean, dry, and string ties removed)

Plastic newspaper bags

Plastic dry-cleaning bags

Plastic wrap from paper products (Paper towels, toilet paper, etc)

Plastic wrap from beverage products (Water bottles, sports drinks, etc)

Plastic pallet wrap

Plastic air pillows found inside shipping packages (Air removed)

HOW LONG WILL THE CURRENT SITUATION LAST?

We anticipate recycling revenue will be substantially less for about 18 months. The good news is that investors in the U.S. and Canada are working with processors to create domestic markets. But this will take a few years.

WHAT CAN THE PUBLIC DO TO HELP?

We need to ‘clean the stream’ and ‘recycle right.’

That means clean your recyclables before putting them in your curbside bin or at the public drop-off of the Recycling and Solid Waste Center – all jars, plastics, tin foil, etc. **must be free of excess food residue, and containers must be rinsed.** This also applies to paper and cardboard, including pizza boxes.

Place only items that can be recycled in your curbside bin, and “if in doubt, keep it out!”