

Proper Recycling & Waste Management

How to Take out the Trash

A Guide to Doing it right in Lawrence and Mercer Counties

We all generate waste. Our waste stream has changed over the years and will continue to change as our technologies and lifestyles evolve. A waste stream that was primarily glass, metal, and paper decades ago now includes plastic and various types of metals and chemicals. Our trash is significantly more toxic now as a result of electronic devices and chemicals we use in our daily lives.

Fortunately, our waste management practices adapt to our changing waste streams and most of the potentially toxic waste we generate is recyclable.

Daily Trash

The daily trash we generate is easy to manage. Several haulers provide weekly trash service and many municipalities have contracts for it. Curbside recycling is widely available even for most rural municipalities. All municipalities have the authority to establish trash and/or recycling programs regardless of their population.

Bulky Items and Other Hard-to-Dispose Items

Some items are difficult to manage because of their size, potential toxicity, and/or regulations such as landfill bans. Consequently, most haulers don't accept these items or have special services for additional fees to address them. Some items, including tires, televisions, and computers are not accepted by haulers because they are banned from landfill disposal in Pennsylvania. There are several service options to address bulky items. Please refer to our other fact sheets for specific information regarding bulky waste, tires, electronics, household hazardous waste, Freon-containing appliances, and many other special handling materials.

Contracts

Municipal contracts are a great tool to provide uniform waste and recycling services. In addition to regular trash collection, municipal contracts can include spring/fall cleanups, tags, bulky item collection, or special pickup for hazardous materials. This is an easy and convenient way to properly dispose of furniture, cabinets, mattresses, and other large items.

Roll-offs

Roll-off boxes/dumpsters are a great tool for do-it-yourselfers. Roll-offs are available in a variety of sizes and can be ordered for different time frames. With the exception of banned materials (such as tires and televisions) and liquid wastes, roll-off are great for most bulky items, home clean-outs, and getting rid of waste generated by construction projects.

Clean-outs

General haulers can be hired to remove and haul trash and junk out of your home, garage, and basement. When hiring a general hauler always pay with a check and demand a receipt and proof of insurance. This is a service that is frequently abused by people hoping to make easy money and illegally dump waste materials instead of taking them to a landfill. Always be wary of deals that seem too good to be true or general haulers that accept items that other haulers and roll-off companies won't accept. Be sure to check out our Fact Sheet "Hiring a Hauler" for important information about finding the right hauler for you.

Self-haul

If you have the means, you can take your waste directly to a landfill or transfer station. This option may be cheaper than the other options discussed here. Download a copy of our Fact Sheet about Landfills and Transfer Stations that include a list of facilities that serve our area.

Open Burning & Dumping

Open dumping is illegal.

Open burning of waste is illegal but there is an exception. According to the Pennsylvania Air Quality regulations residents may burn (unless prohibited by their municipality) items such as paper and wood, that do not give off harmful emissions. Plastic, leaves, electronics, tires, and other similar materials are illegal to burn because they do give off harmful emissions. It is illegal to burn recyclables in municipalities that are required to have a recycling program.

It is illegal for ALL businesses, including construction contractors, to burn ANY waste.

Given the widespread availability of waste and recycling services and potential damage to our health and environment, the backyard burning of waste is not a good option for disposal.



Recycling/Solid Waste Department



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