

PROPER RECYCLING DEVELOPING A MUNICIPAL CURBSIDE PROGRAM

A Guide to doing it right in Lawrence and Mercer Counties.



In Pennsylvania, municipalities have the primary responsibility for recycling and waste management programs. Municipalities with a population of 5,000 or more are required to have curbside recycling programs for their residents and businesses. These are referred to as "mandated municipalities." Those under 5,000 have the option to choose whether to establish a program or not.

As recycling and waste management practices evolve, municipalities more frequently ask for guidance on updating existing programs, adding hard-to-recycle items, or creating a brand new program from "scratch." The Lawrence-Mercer Recycling/Solid Waste Department (RSW) is available free of charge to work with your municipality on the development of a program that meets your needs.

This fact sheet will focus on curbside programs by providing a brief overview of what RSW views as core services and what services may be a valuable add-on for your community. These services can be provided by the municipality or a private hauler. If using a contract with a private hauler, feedback from prospective haulers will be important for your program, but ultimately, the haulers will be required to perform the level of service requested by the municipality.

Core Base Service

RSW recommends the following for a basic level of service:

- Weekly trash collection,
- Every other week recycling collection,
- Leaf waste collection (for mandated municipalities), and a
- Tag program for bulky items.

Variable and Volume Based Programs

Municipalities may want to offer residents different sized containers to pick from as part of a volume based program. For example, your municipality may want to consider 96 gallon wheeled containers for recycling, 60 gallon for trash, and bags for seniors and others who do not generate much waste. Any combination can be used, although consistency is recommended.

Different fee levels can be established for different sized containers.

Base Service Fee

Municipalities and haulers are encouraged to use a Base Service Fee. This is a monthly minimum fee paid by each household regardless of their participation or the level of service selected. There is a per house cost to get vehicles to every home regardless of how much material a household produces.

Tag Program - Bulky Items and Excess Trash

Tag programs are an easy way to provide residents with year-round curbside disposal of bulky items. They can also be used to place on bags of trash for situations when residents have more waste than will fit into their container, such as after a party or holiday. Tags are purchased by residents to place on bulky items for curbside pickup. Tags can be included in a municipal contract or as part of a municipal provided collection.

<https://lawrencecountypa.gov/departments/recycling-and-solid-waste>

www.mercercountypa.gov/recycling

This publication is funded in part through a grant from the PA Department of Environmental Protection.



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A tag system can be a standalone program (without an annual cleanup) or used to supplement an annual cleanup program. Tags can be made available through the contractor, municipality, and/or various other outlets. Tags can also help reduce contract and program costs when residents use the program regularly rather than hold on to materials for an annual cleanup. The use of tags is relatively inexpensive for residents versus the cost of a spring cleanup or renting a dumpster.

Can, Wheeled Containers, or Bags?

Materials may be collected in traditional cans/containers, wheeled carts, or bags (not recommended). Cans and carts come in a variety of colors and sizes. Cans may be cumbersome to move around, whereas wheeled carts tend to be easy to move. RSW recommends the use of wheeled carts. Lidded carts also prevent litter.

Stand-alone bag programs (without cans/carts) are not recommended. Standard sized bags don't provide sufficient space for some larger items. In areas without annual cleanup programs, this leads to increased illegal dumping and burning. Bag programs also tend to encourage significant contamination of the recyclables as residents put more waste into their recycling bins to avoid paying for bags.

For contracts with private haulers, have the hauler responsible for providing, storing, distributing, and maintaining the carts/containers. Otherwise, your municipality will be responsible for these costs. Occasionally there are grants available that help with the cost of the carts.

Bags can be used in conjunction with a base service fee and are a good option for homes that don't generate much waste.

Add-on Services

The side panel contains a list of add-on services that can be added individually to your program. Keep in mind that each service will usually result in an increase to the monthly rate.

Leaf Waste Collection

Leaf waste, by definition, includes leaves, garden residue, tree trimmings, shrubbery, and similar materials. It does NOT include grass clippings. Mandated municipalities are required to provide opportunities for leaf waste. Leaf waste collection is an option for non-mandated municipalities. Grass can be collected as long as the compost facility is permitted to accept it.

Spring/Fall Cleanup

Spring cleanups are one of the most frequently requested services. These programs make great add-on by giving residents an annual, or more frequent, opportunity to dispose of bulky items and excess clutter. Annual cleanup programs also help to reduce illegal dumping and burning.

Spring cleanups do not usually include electronics, tires, and similar items that are banned from landfill disposal.

The Short List

Core Needs

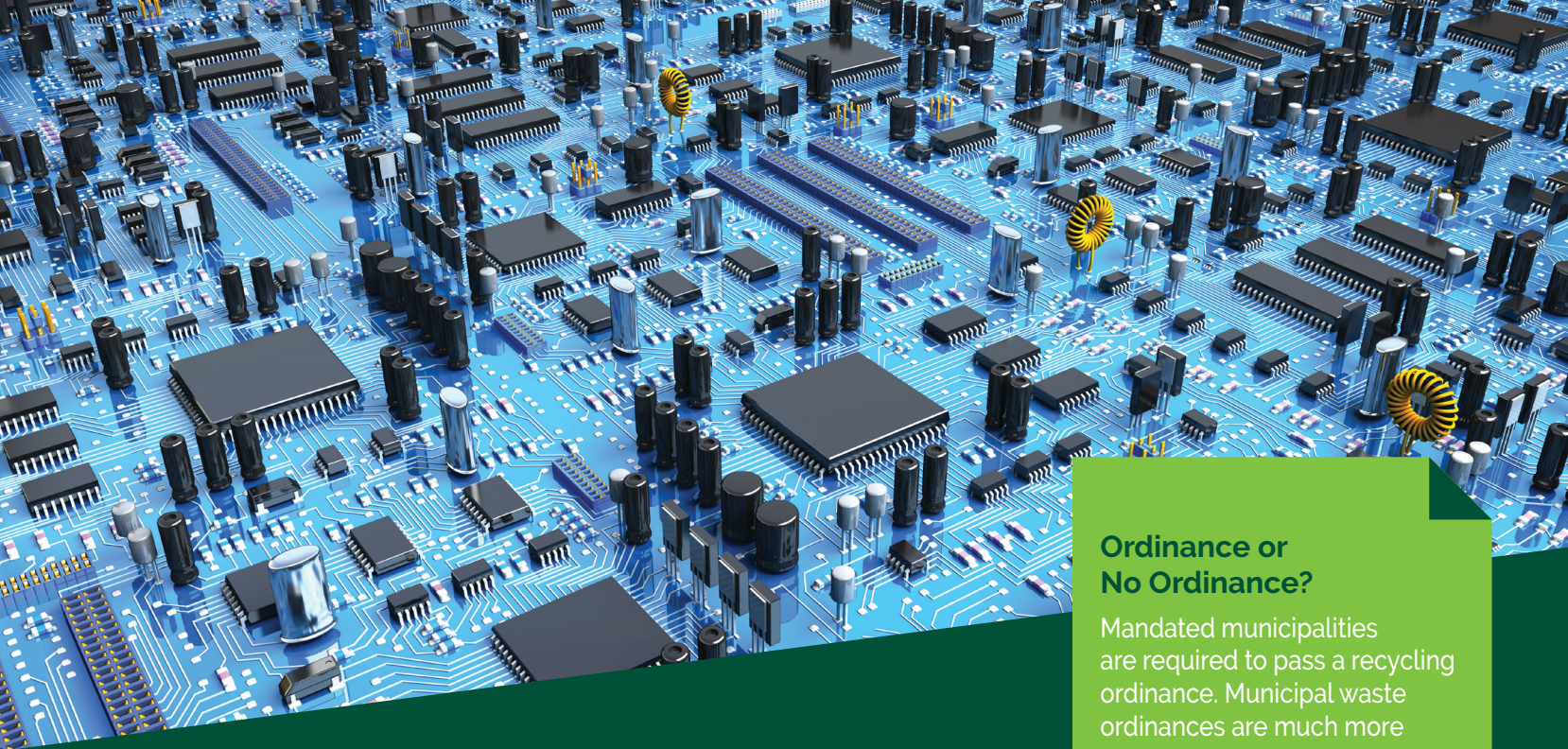
Weekly Trash Pickup
Bi-weekly Recycling Pickup
Leaf Waste (for Mandated)

Optional Add-ons

Leaf Waste Collection
Tags for Bulky Items
Annual Cleanup
Hard-to-Dispose Items
(Electronics, Household
Hazardous Waste,
Appliances, etc.)
Other Items
Municipal Facilities
Special Events
Multi-Family Dwellings
Holiday Trees

Resident Options

Backdoor service
Special Tags
Special Opt Outs
Hardship



Electronics Collection and Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection

Electronics and HHW programs are growing in popularity and can be offered curbside or via a dropoff program. Curbside collection is the most convenient for residents and may be managed exclusively by the contractor.

Your municipality may host an on-going or less frequent drop-off program. This option may require more of your participation.

Alternatively, outside of a municipal contract, there are contractors that provide similar services that can be offered on an "as needed" or event basis.

Appliances, Tires, and Other Materials

Municipalities also have the option to collect these materials curbside or through a special drop-off (on-going or periodic) program.

Some items, such as appliances and furniture, are best dealt with through a tag program instead of adding special provisions to a contract.

Burning

Mandated municipalities and municipalities that are seeking recycling grants are required to address the open burning of waste. Specifically, an ordinance must prohibit the burning of recyclables and leaf waste. Alternatively, if a municipality has a contract but does not have a burning ordinance, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection will assume that burning is not allowed.

Ordinance or No Ordinance?

Mandated municipalities are required to pass a recycling ordinance. Municipal waste ordinances are much more common.

In general, ordinances are needed to enforce the provisions of a contract or program.

Although not recommended, programs can be developed without an ordinance. This will result in higher contract rates and program costs if residents are not required to participate. Participants will be paying for residents not using the program.

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