

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Recycling involves the collection, sorting and reprocessing of discarded goods to create the same or a different product. Understanding the entire process can help us make it more effective - we may be able to increase the quality of recycled products by reducing any **contamination** of the materials. Contamination occurs when items that cannot be recycled are mixed with those that can. These contaminating items can cause problems in the recycling process and make the recyclables unacceptable for reprocessing at the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF).

Below are some **Frequently Asked Questions** that may help your understanding of why some items can or cannot be recycled.

PAPER AND CARDBOARD

Do I have to remove sticky tape, staples or plastic windows from envelopes?

No. You can leave these as they are removed when the paper is processed into paper pulp.

Can I recycle pizza boxes?

Yes. You can recycle pizza boxes as long as the food has been removed. A small amount of oil residue is OK.

Why can't I recycle waxed boxes?

The wax coating on the cardboard box will not dissolve in the paper pulping process and therefore cannot be recycled.

Why can't I recycle tissues, paper towels and serviettes?

The paper fibre within tissues, paper towels and serviettes is too weak to be recycled.

My cardboard boxes are too big to fit into the bin, how do I recycle them?

You can pull apart or rip up your large boxes so that you can place them in your recycling bin. Any boxes left beside the recycling bin will not be collected and the lid of your recycling bin must be able to close. You can drop off excess cardboard for free at the Blaxland and Katoomba Waste Management Facilities (WMF).

METALS

Why can't I recycle coat hangers, pots, pans and other scrap metal in my household recycling bin?

Coat hangers and irregular shaped pieces of metal can't be processed at the MRF. They get caught in the machinery resulting in the facility ceasing operation until the metal has been removed. This is very costly in both time and money.

Why can't I recycle aluminium foil?

Aluminium foil pieces are too small to be collected by the machinery at the MRF. Clean aluminium trays are acceptable.

PLASTICS

Why can't I recycle lids on plastic & glass bottles and jars?

The lids are usually too small to be processed by the machinery at the MRF. All containers need to be empty; if there is any liquid left inside the containers workers are unaware of what it may be. It may be an Occupational Health and Safety issue.

Why can't I recycle pot plants?

Pots from potted plants may contain traces of fertiliser and other contaminants.

Why can't I recycle soft plastics like plastic bags, plastic film and plastic packets?

These forms of plastic get caught easily in the machinery at the MRF. Once wrapped around within the conveyor belt system or machinery the entire facility must be stopped to allow for its removal. This is very costly both in time and money.

Why can't I recycle polystyrene?

Polystyrene is easily broken into tiny uncollectable pieces and is unable to be processed at the MRF.

Do I still need to rinse out my recyclable containers?

Yes. You can rinse out the containers in old dish washing water or wipe or scrape them out to remove the food residue. This helps keep the recycling bin, truck and MRF free from contamination.

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GLASS

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Can I place broken glass in the recycling bin?

No. At the MRF items pass through the pre-sort station where contamination is removed by hand. Broken glass and other sharp items pose a threat to the workers. Only whole glass bottles should be placed in the recycling bin.

Why can't I recycle different types of glass (wine glasses, ceramics, light bulbs, mirror glass and window glass)?

Glass other than that used for glass bottles and jars have varying melting temperatures and may not melt in the glass manufacturing process. This may form contamination in newly made glass bottles and jars.

PROCESS

Where do my recyclable materials go and how are they separated?

The materials go to a Materials Recovery Facility(MRF) where they are sorted by machine and human processes into material types (paper, plastics, glass and metals). These separated and baled materials are then sent for reprocessing at paper mills, metal smelters, glass and plastics factories.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Where can I find information on the volume of recyclables/indication of contamination/material sent to landfill regarding the service?

Council will complete independent annual audits of bins in situ and truckloads delivered to the MRF. As this is a new service, it will take time to gather and record the information to build up a database. Indicative volumes of materials being recycled will be carried out daily at the MRF. For example, the number of bins collected will be compared to the weight of the truck at the MRF. Audits will also be completed by the MRF however these may also include information from other areas also using the MRF. Please contact Blue Mountains City Council for more information.

BINS

Can I leave items next to the recycling bin for collection if my bin is full?

No. Anything left beside the bin will not be collected as the bins are lifted by the recycling vehicle. All items must be placed inside your bin and the lid must be able to be closed properly. You can take recyclables to the Waste Management Facilities (WMF) at Blaxland or Katoomba and drop them off for free. Alternatively, you can ask the provider to take them back.

What is contamination and what will happen to my bin if it is contaminated?

Contamination is anything in your recycling bin that should not be there such as, but not limited to, plastic bags, food waste, general waste or green waste. If your bin has a lot of contamination it may not be serviced until the contamination is removed.

Can I get a smaller garbage bin?

Yes. If your current garbage bin is too large and you would like to contribute less to landfill, swap your 240 litre garbage bin to a 140 litre Eco Bin Service. Save money on your rates and also receive a discounted compost bin as well as making an important environmental contribution. Phone Council on 4780 5000 to make the swap.

Why did Council choose the 'small' recycling bin size?

The smaller bin is easier for all residents to manage. Our residents' survey also indicated strong support for the 'smaller' bin and residents thought the 140 litre capacity would comfortably meet the average households' recycling needs as well as be a manageable size. The 140 litre size means we are able to maintain our weekly collection service whilst maximising the recycling output.