

# HELP PROTECT WASTE & RECYCLING WORKERS NOW

Solid waste collection is a critical and essential job as part of the response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. You can help protect the health of the men and women who collect your trash and recycling during this vital time. The virus may survive for up to 24 hours on cardboard and two to three days on plastic\*. With a few simple steps, you can protect sanitation workers by reducing the possibility they will come into contact with potentially contaminated items.

## GARBAGE

- Make sure all your trash is inside a closed plastic bag. If a bin or cart are provided, all materials must fit inside. No bags should be left next to the bins or carts.
- Wash your hands before putting your waste containers out for collection. Sanitize or wipe handles and lids to further reduce exposure.
- **Please do not "spring clean" at this time.** Collection workers are working harder and more carefully right now, sometimes with fewer people. Do not add to the waste by cleaning garages, attics, closets, basements, etc. All material should fit into a container, if provided.

## RECYCLING

Recycling remains important during this time. The materials you put out for collection are turned into cardboard boxes, tissues, and paper towels that we need now more than ever.

- Tissues, paper towels, wipes, masks, latex gloves, or any other sanitary or cleaning materials used to protect you from the Coronavirus should NOT go into recycling carts or bins. (These items are never recyclable.) **RECYCLED MATERIALS ARE OFTEN HANDLED BY WORKERS WHEN SORTED LATER.**
- Break down large cardboard boxes and cut them apart, if needed, to fit inside your recycling container. Recyclables that do not fit inside a container should not be put out.
- Empty, rinse, and dry your bottles, cans, and other containers before you recycle them.
- Food and liquids never belong in recycling.

## VISITING FACILITIES

If your community still allows members of the public to drop-off waste or recyclables at a facility, please follow all safety policies and procedures required by that facility. These might include not paying with cash, keeping at least 6 feet of distance between you, other customers, and any employees, and unloading in the correct area to avoid requiring staff to handle discarded materials more than necessary. And of course, always follow all safety rules regarding speed limits, cell phone usage, and remaining near/in your vehicle.

## OTHER SERVICES

To keep workers safe, minimize their exposure, and handle all of the waste and recycling coming from homes, your waste services provider may make temporary changes, including suspending bulk waste pickup or yard waste collection, and closing drop off centers or other facilities to the general public. These are temporary changes meant to protect the lives of the hard working men and women in the waste and recycling industry.

For more information about how the Coronavirus is impacting waste employees and employers, visit [SWANA.org](https://www.swana.org).

\* World Health Organization, Q&A on coronaviruses (COVID-19). [<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>]