

Cleaning up recycling by removing contaminants

With requirements changing in the world market, it's important more now than ever, that our recycling is as clean as possible. This not only means making sure materials are empty, clean and dry, but also that only the right materials are going in the cart. A contaminant is anything that isn't recyclable and therefore should not be in the recycle cart.

The chart below from Republic Services shows a list of common contaminants found in the recycle cart, with information about why they shouldn't go in and how to properly dispose of these items. Republic Services will continue working with customers to convey the changes in recycling. Remember that the cleanliness and quality of recycling is of the utmost importance, so when in doubt, throw it out.

What	Why	Where Can it Go
Paper milk/juice cartons, paper broth containers, paper coffee cups	These have tiny plastic fibers embedded in them, which are difficult to separate from the paper fiber for recycling	These items should go in the trash. Try to reassess purchasing habits and find products with less packaging or more recyclable material
Nursery Pots	There currently are no markets for this plastic.	Trash, or reuse for other plants or creative activities
Clamshells	No market currently exists for this low-grade plastic. End of life phase.	Place in trash cart. Avoid purchasing when possible.
Plastic Bags	Plastic bags mixed with other recyclables can jam the sorting equipment at the sorting facility	Many local grocery stores have collection bins for plastic bags too.
Garden hoses	Hoses can wrap around machinery at the sorting facility, which could cause damage	Place in the trash if it can't be repaired for reuse
Chain & Other Scrap Metal	These items can get caught in machinery and cause harm to workers	Bring to the scrap metal bin at the transfer station or to a scrap metal buyer
Clothing	Clothing wraps around machinery and can cause friction fires	Donate; repair; repurpose as rags; or place in trash
Garbage	Garbage is not recyclable and only contaminates the good material being placed in the recycle cart	Placed garbage in the trash cart or bring to landfill. Call the office if you need a bigger cart
Styrofoam	Breaks into tiny pieces when compacted in the recycle truck, no local recycling facility, uneconomical to transport.	Place in trash. Avoid purchasing items in excessive packaging when possible.
Plastic cups, plates and silverware	No market currently exists for this low-grade plastic. End of life phase.	Place in trash cart. Swap out for durables when possible.