April 9, 2020

Solid Waste & COVID-19

Guidance for Solid Waste Managers

In accordance with the Governor’s Stay Home/Stay Safe Executive Order 01-20 (Addendum 6 of March 24, 2020), services or functions in Vermont deemed critical to public health and safety, as well as economic and national security include solid waste collection services for trash, food scraps, and mandated (blue bin) recyclables.

For the safety of solid waste managers and customers during the COVID-19 state of emergency, Vermont DEC recommends solid waste facilities and haulers take the following precautions:

- Direct staff to stay home if they feel sick.
- Practice social distancing by keeping at least 6 feet of space between people.
- Staff should always wear gloves and avoid touching their face. Staff should be provided with a change of gloves as needed and have access to a hand washing station or, at a minimum, hand sanitizer. Eye protection also makes sense for some duties.
- Staff should wear masks when interacting with one another or the public.
- For staff and customer safety, schedule periodic shutdown breaks to allow staff to wash/sanitize hands and sanitize surfaces.
- Avoid handling trash that is not bagged or wear gloves/wash/sanitize hands after handling.
- Customers should stay in their vehicle while waiting at the scales or in line to drop their trash.
- Discourage loitering/chatting with signage.
- Limit the number of people in an enclosed space at one time.
- When possible, encourage payment with cards, checks or prepaid vouchers rather than cash.
- Provide a collection container to pass cash or checks instead of handing money directly to staff.
- Disinfect the collection container and any areas that are touched frequently, such as compactor buttons, dumpster covers, door handles, railings, etc.
- Designate vehicles/equipment to one staff person – or thoroughly disinfect between operators.
- Where possible, limit staffs’ exposure when taking money by installing clear plastic sheeting or a plexiglass barrier at the attendant’s booth.
• Consider implementing no-cash procedures such as advance payment or self-pay collection bins.

• Notify customers to postpone bringing in other solid waste materials, such as household hazardous waste, bulky waste, furniture, and tires until a later date.
  
  o Information about backyard composting can be found here.
  
  o Customers should postpone bringing in household hazardous waste and store it in safe, leak-proof containers somewhere that kids and pets cannot access them. Learn more about safe storage here.

• Consider temporarily closing Swap Shops and encouraging customers to save items in good condition to donate later.

• For requests to increase or change operating hours or daily tonnage limits, please contact Dennis Fekert at dennis.fekert@vermont.gov.

• Clearly communicate any change in operating hours or operations to the public via various media, such as local newspapers, sandwich board sign, Front Porch Forum, Facebook, website, press releases, radio, or online newsletters.

• For additional information on waste worker safety, please refer to:
  
  o Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI) - https://www.isri.org/covid-19-guidance-to-help-recyclers-operate-safely
  
  o Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) - https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/controlprevention.html#solidwaste
  
  o Center for Disease Control (CDC) - https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/faq.html#waste
  

If you have questions, please contact the VT DEC Solid Waste Program at 802-828-1138 or DEC Solid Waste Program staff at https://dec.vermont.gov/waste-management/contacts.

Help prevent the spread of COVID-19 throughout Vermont. Learn more at VT Department of Health.