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## Public Works and Environmental Services



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## Trash and Yard Waste Collection Changes Explained

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Several changes to Fairfax County's solid waste collection requirements were made Friday, March 27. (news release). The changes, which went into effect Monday, March 30, are temporary and in response to the current public health emergency. There are several reasons why the changes were made, including:



- Protecting the workforce to ensure that personnel remain available to collect trash and protect public health.
- Minimize workers' physical contact with surfaces where the coronavirus can survive for several days.
- Follow social distancing guidance by reducing crew sizes and using automated collection vehicles.



There has been a dramatic increase in trash, recycling, and yard waste because households are full of students and teleworking adults and spring weather has arrived. The additional volume is straining the solid waste collection system at a time when there are fewer workers available to collect, transport, and process the material.

Solid waste programs throughout the state and the nation are facing higher absenteeism due to the disruption caused by the coronavirus. Trash and recycling collection workers face the same challenges as everyone else, such as finding childcare and addressing family health concerns. This has caused a significant shortage of trained personnel to cover all the normal functions of solid waste programs. The remaining workforce is being deployed to provide only essential sanitation services – weekly trash collection, which can attract vermin and be a vector for disease if left uncollected. Yard waste collection and glass recycling are not essential to preserving public health.

### **Glass Recycling**

Temporarily removing the purple, glass-only recycling containers not only eliminates additional driving routes, it also eliminates a place where people may congregate during the Virginia Governor's stay-at-home order. Glass can be stored at home until the purple containers return or placed in the trash.

### **Yard Waste**

The county's Solid Waste Management Program is no longer requiring licensed companies to collect yard waste separately. Yard waste can be placed in the trashcan, but not left on the curb in bags or bundles. Residents are encouraged to manage yard waste on their property



by mulching, backyard composting, or not generating yard waste at all if possible.

### **Best Practices for Residents**

Residents can help reduce the volume of trash and create safer working conditions for workers by following these best practices:

1. Reduce the waste households generate so the system isn't overwhelmed. (Postpone spring cleaning.)
2. Wipe and disinfect cart handles and lids.
3. Stop setting out yard waste at the curb. Implement mulching or backyard composting.
4. Seal sharp medical objects in a rigid plastic container with sturdy tape and label it "sharps."
5. Bag all trash to limit workers' exposure to harmful materials.

These changes are only temporary. Full service will be restored when the public health emergency is over. Thank you for your patience as we work to protect the men and women who keep Fairfax County's communities clean and healthy.

