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County Executive



## PLASTIC DISPOSABLE BAGS AND PLASTIC FILM (stretch film)

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Prince George's County is #1 in Maryland for waste diversion  
and #2 recycling and it's time we take the next step!



### Why is the County no longer accepting single-use plastic bags in the Single-Stream Recycling Program?

Starting July 1, 2015, plastic bags of any color, size or shape and plastic film WILL NO longer be accepted in the Prince George's County Residential Curbside Single-Stream Recycling Program. The plastic bags and plastic film that are currently placed into the single-stream recycling program are NOT being recycled and end up as landfill waste. The County strongly encourages residents to use reusable bags in lieu of using plastic bags.

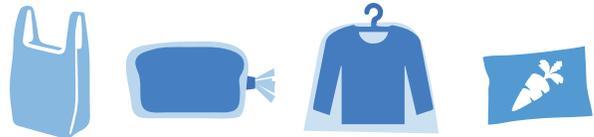
The County will no longer accept the plastic bags/film because there is not an end market for the material after it has been collected in a single-stream recycling collection program/process. The plastic bags/film become dirty and contaminated once they are mixed with other recyclables, reducing their quality and value to manufacturers who use and purchase the plastic bags/film for making recycled products such as plastic lumber.

Additionally, the County's Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) uses an automated system that sorts and bales the recyclables and is not designed or engineered to process plastic bags/film. The bags/film jam and clog the machinery causing costly damages and equipment downtime, contributing to high labor costs. Health risks are also placed on the assembly line workers (sorters) when they remove the plastic bags from the recyclable material as the bags could contain dangerous items (hypodermic needles, medical waste, sharp objects) placing the sorters at risk for injury.

### What types of plastic bags/film are considered unacceptable in the County's Residential Curbside Single-Stream Program?

The following items contained in the below list WILL NO longer be accepted in the Residential Curbside Single-Stream Recycling Program:

#### Here's what NOT to recycle ►



Any grocery, retail or trash plastic bag

Bread bags

Dry cleaning bags

Fruit and vegetable bags (fresh/frozen)

Garden product bags (soil/mulch)

Newspaper bags

Outer wrap from paper towel, napkin and diaper packages

Outer wrap from cases of soda, juice and snacks

Zipper or stand-up pouches, bubble or cling wrap

Crinkle bags for cereal, pasta or snack bags

Outer wrap from meat or cheese products

## **I notice the ban includes bags for vegetables, newspaper sleeves, dry-cleaning bags and outer wrap from meat and cheese products. Why are they also banned?**

These items are banned because they also pose a problem with the sorting process. For more information on unacceptable items, [click here](#) or visit our website at [environment.mypgc.us](http://environment.mypgc.us).

## **Can black, dark green or any other color of large plastic bags be placed in the recycling cart or bin? Can these bags be used for recycling?**

No, these types of bags are not accepted in the County's Residential Curbside Single-Stream Recycling Program and are not an acceptable item to place or use to line the recycling collection container.

## **What will happen if I put plastic bags in my recycling cart after the ban takes place?**

After July 1, 2015, the recycling contractors WILL NOT empty recycling carts or bins that contain plastic bags or plastic film and will tag unacceptable containers with a sticker. We encourage residents to comply with the ban to keep the County moving forward with its recycling and waste diversion goals.

## **Are the clean/translucent recycling container liners acceptable?**

Large clear/translucent plastic liner bags that contain recyclable materials may still be used as long as no other plastic bags or plastic film/stretch film is contained within the liner bag. If recycling is prepared properly your recycling will save you money (no need to purchase liner bags) and will eliminate plastic bag waste. REMEMBER – even clear plastic liners are NOT recyclable when mixed with the Residential Curbside Single-Stream Recycling Collection Program.

## **Can the large paper yard bags used for yard waste collection, be used as a collection container/liner for the recycling cart/bin?**

No. The recycling hauler may mistake the large paper yard bags as containing yard waste and leave the material at the curb.

## **Where can I recycle plastic bags?**

Return to sender! Most local grocery stores and other retailers have plastic bag recycling collection programs and have placed collection boxes in their stores. Most are usually located at or near a store's main entrance. [Click here](#) to find drop-off locations in your area or visit <http://plasticfilmrecycling.org>.

## **What types of plastic bags should I recycle at stores?**

Most clean and dry plastic bags are 100 percent recyclable at participating retail and local drop-off locations. These bags are usually designated with the three recycling arrows and are made of vinyl or poly vinyl chloride (PVC).

## **What happens to bags after they are recycled properly?**

Plastic bags are recycled into many different products. Most plastic bags are turned into composite lumber. They can also be reprocessed and turned into small pellets used to make new bags, pallets, containers, crates and pipe.

## **Where can I get reusable shopping bags?**

Most grocery, pharmacy and other retailers sell reusable bags for a nominal fee. You can help the environment by using and purchasing reusable bags when shopping or opting for paper bags where available.

## **Should I recycle degradable bags?**

No. Biodegradable/compostable bags should not be placed in the County's Residential Curbside Single-Stream Recycling Program because these types of bags are made from a different type of material, breakdown over time and are not acceptable for recycling purposes.

## **Who do I contact for more information on the county's residential curbside single-stream recycling program?**

To submit a service request for more information on recycling programs, please contact CountyClick at 3-1-1 or submit a request for assistance online at [www.countyclick311.com](http://www.countyclick311.com).