

Minor Recycling Changes Take Effect July 1

Western Mass residents may have heard that changes to household recycling rules are pending. Please be assured that changes for the average household will be minor.

First, some background. The Springfield Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) accepts, sorts, bales, and sells recyclable material from 73 member communities in western Mass. The MRF is the only recycling facility in Massachusetts that is owned by the Commonwealth. It is operated by a private operator, and a 15 member advisory board discusses and reviews its operations, provides recycling education (such as this guide) to the public, and acts as a liaison between member communities, the MRF operator and Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.

A new contract with the private operator, Waste Management Recycles America, will go into effect on July 1, 2020. The new contract adds two items to list of acceptable material and removes two items. Details are provided below.

Shredded paper and aerosol cans will no longer be accepted

As of July 1, 2020, shredded paper will no longer be acceptable in western Massachusetts' household/municipal paper



recycling program. Going forward, the best way to get your confidential documents recycled is to bring them to area businesses (e.g. copy shops, office supply, shipping stores, and local banks) for secure shredding. Many local banks sponsor free spring and fall shredding events. The material generated from commercial shredding operations is taken directly to local paper mills, avoiding the scattering and contamination that ensues at a household recycling facility. If you are not able to bring your paper to a business or public event for shredding, please dispose of shredded paper as trash.

On July 1st, 2020, aerosol cans will no longer be accepted in municipal recycling. Until then, recycle only EMPTY aerosol cans that contained non-hazardous materials, such as health & beauty products (sun block, first aid spray, hair products, deodorant, & shaving cream); food products (cooking oil, whipped cream, frosting) and laundry products (starch, anti-static products & air fresheners). To prevent a fire hazard, cans must be completely empty (no air or noise from the nozzle when pressed). Do not puncture, pierce, flatten, or remove nozzles prior to recycling.

Clear plastic cups and egg cartons will be considered acceptable

As of July 1, 2020, crystal clear plastic cups (printed OK) will be considered acceptable in municipal recycling. Remove lids and straws and place them in a trash receptacle.

Other plastic cups, such as polystyrene (#6 plastic), colored “keg” cups, and opaque (cloudy) plastic cups, are not acceptable for recycling and must go in the trash. If a clear cup is labeled “compostable,” it should NOT go in recycling. “Compostable plastic” cups may go in municipal or commercial compost programs. These products are not designed to degrade in home compost bins or piles.

Starting on July 1, clear plastic egg cartons will be officially accepted.

Paper & Styrofoam egg cartons are not accepted in municipal recycling, but are often reused by backyard chicken farmers. Paper cartons may also be composted in municipal compost collections, or in home compost bins (for home composting, rip into pieces.)

For more information on what is and is not accepted for recycling in western Mass, please visit the Springfield MRF's website: (springfieldmrf.org) and Facebook page (facebook.com/SpringfieldMRF)