

Keeping waste and recycling facilities open

The NSW Government is working closely with the waste and recycling industry and councils to ensure critical waste services continue.

This is a developing situation and the response taken by the NSW Government to COVID-19 may change over time.

The risk of transmission of COVID-19 when handling waste is low. Waste handling should continue using safe routine procedures.

Essential waste services continue

Public health orders have been issued to protect the community and reduce the spread of COVID-19 infection. Despite public health orders listing restrictions to activities and places that are closed, the waste and recycling industry should remain open and continue to provide its important services to the community and businesses.

Keeping facilities open also helps to reduce the potential for illegal dumping of waste that costs millions of dollars to clean up.

Keeping waste and recycling facilities open for workers

Workers can still go to work in the waste and recycling industry if they cannot work from home. Workers can continue to travel for the purposes of work. They may wish to carry identification or wear a uniform to assist with COVID-19 compliance checks.

A list of public health orders currently in force is at legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/. The list will be updated progressively.

Worker health and safety

Under the model work health and safety laws, employers must have measures in place to eliminate or manage the risks arising from COVID-19. Measures to reduce risk include providing workers with appropriate personal protective equipment such as gloves and eye protection, and information and training on how and why they are required to use them.

Further information on worker health and safety can be found at safework.nsw.gov.au/resource-library/Coronavirus-advice-and-guidance-for-NSW-workplaces/fags.

Keeping waste and recycling facilities open to the public

It is important that the waste and recycling industry and councils continue to provide critical waste services to the public. This includes keeping waste and recycling centres open so that people can easily dispose of their waste.

People may leave their home to visit a waste facility to meet their household needs to dispose of waste.

Further information on what people can and can't do under the current rules is at service.nsw.gov.au/covid-19.

How to protect yourself and others

These simple steps can help to protect yourself, workers and the public at your facility:

- Practise good hygiene by regularly washing your hands for at least 20 seconds.
- Stay at least 1.5 metres away from others.
- Stay home if you are sick or feel unwell.
- Limit gatherings in a public place to two people.

How to keep waste and recycling facilities open for all

Here are some tips for the waste and recycling industry and councils to use while staying open:

- If open to the public, operators must allow at least four-square metres of space for each person. Mark out public areas of your premises. Determine how many people can safely be in that area at any one time. Mark out individual person spacing or vehicle spacing using tape, flagging or signage.
- Count and restrict the number of people coming in or out of a public area to avoid queuing and close confines.
- Where practicable, consider whether the opening hours or shift times can be adjusted to allow separation of workers and the public.
- Encourage the public to stay in their vehicles until it is time to dispose of waste from their vehicle or trailer.
- Use traffic management personnel and signage to ensure vehicles move in and out of public areas quickly.
- Offer on-request bulk collection services at people's homes, where practicable, to reduce the number of public visits to a facility.
- Encourage all workers to frequently wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitiser and to practise good hygiene.
- Encourage the public to use electronic payment transactions, not cash. Regularly clean and disinfect terminals. For intermittent handling of cash, workers should wash their hands for at least 20 seconds immediately after handling cash (either soap and water or hand sanitiser, whichever is available). For longer periods of cash handling, workers should wear gloves and then carefully remove them and perform hand hygiene immediately afterwards.
- Be aware of COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat and shortness of breath) and make sure workers do not come to work if they are unwell.
- Make sure accessible areas of your facility are regularly cleaned and disinfected.
- Have signs and posters around the facility to remind workers and the public of the risks of COVID-19 and the measures that are necessary to stop its spread.

- Maintain good communications with your customers, particularly around any service changes or disruptions.

Return and Earn

Many over the counter collection points are closed but Return and Earn machines are still operating and can be accessed for returns if they are at supermarkets or in locations that can be accessed under the public health orders currently in force.

Before leaving home, people should check the Return and Earn website for opening hours at returnandearn.org.au.

Household chemicals

The safe way to dispose of potentially hazardous household chemicals is at a Community Recycling Centre or household Chemical CleanOut event.

Most Community Recycling Centres remain open. Before leaving home, people should check the EPA's website for opening hours at epa.nsw.gov.au.

Chemical CleanOut events have been postponed until the end of May 2020. Updates are available at cleanout.com.au.

If someone can't access a Community Recycling Centre, they should store any household chemicals safely at home until their local Chemical CleanOut events resume.

Key contacts

Service NSW - for information and advice for NSW businesses go to service.nsw.gov.au.

Health - follow the COVID-19 health advice at NSW Health at health.nsw.gov.au.

Worker health and safety - follow SafeWork NSW advice at safework.nsw.gov.au.

Waste - for information about transport and disposal of waste visit epa.nsw.gov.au or call the Environment Line on 131 555.

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April 2020

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