



Recycling Frequently Asked Questions

What can be recycled right now?

Glass is being recycled at the moment. Kerbside collections have returned to normal so please place glass in your green crate or take it to a Refuse Transfer Station (RTS). RTS hours and locations: tcdc.govt.nz/rts.

Other recycling (cans, paper, plastics) are being collected as part of Kerbside collections or can be taken to your nearest RTS. However, these may still be sent to landfill until mid-June 2020 while the Materials Recovery Facility in Kopu gets back up and running to full capacity.

Download our convenient Guide to Recycling on the Coromandel from our website: tcdc.govt.nz/kerbside.

I've been storing recycling at home during COVID-19, what should I do with this?

If you, like us, hate the idea of recycling going into landfill, you may be holding on to your recycling – especially plastics - until services return to normal. While this sounds like a great idea, and we know you have the best of intentions, please don't. This is not a local issue, it is a global one.

Much of New Zealand's plastic recyclable material is purchased by overseas markets. These markets, especially China, have largely closed over the last two years, and COVID-19 has further reduced our country's ability to export plastic.

We have been told by the recycling industry that if we store plastic, it is likely that their quality will deteriorate (due to food residue and exposure to sunlight for example). Therefore stockpiling, whether at your house or in large warehouses, is not a solution. And if that wasn't enough, there is no way to sort a backlog of plastic later, and there is no increase in demand for plastic materials to be able to sell this excess.

So please, do not store your plastic, place it in the rubbish instead. We understand this is a hard to hear and do, but at the moment it is the only option we have. If you bring it to us for recycling, we'll be sending it to landfill until mid-June anyway.

Recycling of tins, paper/cardboard and plastics from the kerbside collections will start being processed again (instead of being sent to landfill) from mid-June. But we'll only be taking plastics 1 and 2.

Why are we only accepting plastic types 1 and 2 now?

The change to collecting only plastics 1 and 2 has nothing to do with COVID-19.

Plastics numbered 1 and 2 can be recycled within New Zealand but types 3 to 7 have to be shipped overseas for processing and are no longer accepted by most global markets.

A number of initiatives have been investigated across New Zealand for recycling plastics 3 to 7, however the viability of this remains largely impractical, so these plastics will be going to landfill in New Zealand for now.

Recycling sent overseas can end up as someone else's rubbish. Shipping our recycling overseas also incurs a large carbon cost and can be processed in countries with significantly different employment

practices to New Zealand – potentially putting those workers at risk handling refuse in unsafe conditions. For these reasons, it's best that we handle all our recycling here in New Zealand.

From 15 June, we will not empty wheelie bins that contain any plastics other than types 1 and 2 and we will only accept plastics 1 and 2 at Refuse Transfer Stations for recycling.

Plastics 3-7 and unnumbered plastics should go in the rubbish.

What about plastic bags?

Soft plastics can't be accepted for recycling with Kerbside collections or at our Refuse Transfer Stations. The Soft Plastic Recycling Scheme collects plastic bags and wrappers from participating supermarkets and some other stores in Auckland and Hamilton, but none yet in Thames-Coromandel District. See their website for participating locations: recycling.kiwi.nz/store-locator

Is it still worthwhile recycling?

Absolutely, and we encourage you to recycle clean plastic types 1 and 2 as much as you can to ensure these fully recyclable items do not end up in landfill or polluting waterways.

What are plastic types 1 and 2?

Drink and sports bottles, water bottles, milk bottles, cleaning products and personal care bottles (shampoo, conditioner and body wash). All of these must have their lids removed and be rinsed clean – if you can't get the lid off to rinse the bottle clean, don't recycle it.

The recycling.co.nz website recycle.co.nz/symbols.php has a good page on the different types of plastic and what uses they are put to.

How can I tell what number each plastic is?

LOOK FOR THE NUMBER. The majority of plastic has a triangular recycling symbol made of arrows with a number inside it on or near the bottom of the item. We are only accepting plastic types with a 1 or 2 in the triangle. If any plastic has 3 to 7 on it, or no number, it is not recyclable. If in doubt about the type of plastic, put it into the rubbish.

Can I still put plastics grades 3-7 into my recycling bin?

No. Plastics other than types 1 and 2 will "contaminate" any particular batch of plastic recycling, making it unrecyclable, and it will have to go to landfill.

We know it's hard to put these into the rubbish bin when you've been able to recycle them up until now, but the reality is, these can't be recycled – they've just been piling up in storage.

Please don't 'wishcyle' and place plastic grades 3-7 into your recycling bin because you wish it could be recycled, or in the hope it might get recycled. It won't be.

How will the contractor know if I am recycling properly?

Smart Environmental, our rubbish and recycling contractor, will be auditing wheelie bins. If your bin contains anything except clean plastic types 1-2, paper and cardboard, or clean tins, it will not be collected until it is once again compliant.

What happens if my wheelie bin isn't compliant?

It will get a ticket attached to it and won't be collected until it is once again compliant.

Why aren't we recycling plastic type 5?

Our contract with Smart Environment is for plastic grades 1-2 only, so they will only accept these grades.

There is a manufacturer in Southland recycling plastic grades 5, however it is not cost effective to send it all there and no guarantee they can keep up with demand or that it won't end up in landfill.

Will I get a rates reduction?

No, your rubbish and recycling is still being collected, sorted and recycled. We will still get a bill from the contractor for this service, and we still have to pay it.

Can I still recycle plastic grades 3-7 at Refuse Transfer Stations?

No, as the transfer stations are also under the Smart Environmental contract, plastic grades 3-7 will not be accepted and should go in your Council rubbish bag.

What do I do with plastic grades 3-7 now?

All plastic grades 3-7 will now need to go into your black Council bag for collection.

How can I reduce my household rubbish and avoid buying plastic that can't be recycled?

Recycling isn't the only answer to reducing household waste. The best approach is to follow the waste hierarchy:

- Refuse: simply don't buy it and research sustainable alternatives;
- Reduce: minimise the amount you buy;
- Reuse: choose products you can use again and again (for example, make your own yoghurt instead of buying individual yoghurt pottles and put a serving size in a reusable container – add frozen berries to keep cool in lunchboxes);
- Recycle: reprocess to produce new products;
- Compost: Place organic waste into a compost bin for the vegetable garden, add to a worm farm or have organic waste collected by a green waste company.

Will the size of the rubbish bags be increased to cope with the extra rubbish?

No, this would increase costs, which would in turn increase rates. The cost of rubbish bags is what pays for their collection and disposal – so the best way to minimise these costs for your household is to minimise your rubbish.

What are other Councils doing?

We share the Smart Environmental contract with Hauraki and Matamata-Piako District councils, so they are also only accepting plastic types 1 & 2. Waipa District Council has also recently made this change, as have many other councils around the country (such as Gisborne, Queenstown, South Waikato, Porirua, Napier, Nelson, and more).

What changes is Council making to reduce its rubbish?

We know we need to lead by example.

- Our elected members and our staff have largely gone paperless. Gone are the days of paper agendas and minutes. Council departments are also following suit and reducing or eliminating all paper, instead using digital options wherever possible.

- We help fund Enviroschools, teaching sustainability to our tamariki
- We have a solid waste working party which oversees the solid waste contract and is actively looking for ways our communities can reduce waste heading for landfill and ensure our Refuse Transfer Stations are working to their greatest potential, making that experience easy for all its users and as environmentally friendly as possible.
- We have been working towards meeting the goals of our East Waikato Waste Management and Minimisation Plan (tcdc.govt.nz/wmmp), which we share with Hauraki and Matamata-Piako District Councils. The Plan aims to encourage people to minimise household rubbish and become more sustainable.