

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

A LA CART

QUARTERLY RECYCLING NEWSLETTER

WISHFUL RECYCLING *WHEN YOU DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD*

It's recycling day. You gather the usual items: last week's newspapers, old cereal boxes, and empty soda cans. Just as you finish rounding up all of your recyclables to place them in the blue cart, you stumble upon last night's pizza box with grease stains and even some leftover cheese. It's made out of cardboard; it would be a shame to throw it in the garbage. So you hope for the best and toss it in your blue cart with the rest of the recyclables. You figure it's better to recycle it than to throw it away, right? Quite the contrary. Those grease stains and the leftover traces of food will contaminate an entire load of good recyclables.

There's a special term for putting non-recyclable or potentially reusable items in the recycling cart. It's known as "wishful" recycling, or aspirational recycling, and it's a big problem for Miami-Dade County's program and in other recycling efforts throughout the country. County residents are so eager to be green that many items, which are meant to be discarded, end up polluting clean batches of recyclables, making them unmarketable.

Some of the most common items that end up in the blue cart are plastic bags and containers. Plastic grocery bags are the biggest culprits that interfere with the sorting process. When the plastic bags pass through the machine, the bags melt and the remnants clog the machine and its gears. Every two hours, the machinery has to be shut down to remove melted bags from the gears so they're able to run smoothly once again.

Although the County's recycling program is not able to accept all plastics, there are alternatives if you are eager to recycle more. For example, many grocery retailers accept plastic bags as well as plastics and foam containers (such as yogurt cups, meat trays and egg cartons).

While wishful recycling comes from a genuine desire to help the environment, it is important to note how it negatively affects the recycling effort. Remember, before you put your blue cart at the curb, make sure to dispose of garbage properly and place only acceptable items in the blue recycling cart.

For more information on proper curbside recycling, please call 311 or visit the Solid Waste Management website at www.miamidade.gov/solidwaste.

RECYCLING ENFORCEMENT SWEEPS AIM TO CURB CONTAMINATION

DSWM enforcement officers check the contents of the blue recycling carts at curbside and courtesy stickers are posted on the contaminated carts. The stickered carts are not serviced by the County's two recycling collection vendors. A corrective action door hanger is also left behind at the property. Both the cart sticker and the door hanger identify the contaminated items that were found in the cart. So far this

year, 25 recycling blitzes have taken place all over the recycling service area with 602 recycling carts found to be contaminated. Blitzes are scheduled to take place weekly and will continue in the future as a means of further educating DSWM customers on proper recycling habits.

MDC Solid Waste App

Get our new smartphone app free at the Apple iTunes app store and the Google Play app store (available in early 2019!). You can request solid waste and mosquito control services, find DSWM facilities that are nearby, contact us and more.

CARTS GONE BAD!!!

Your blue cart is for cardboard, paper, bottles, cans (food/ beverage) **ONLY**.

DEAR RECYCLINA: Yesterday I came across the “Recycling Correctly Matters!” pamphlet and learned that I cannot recycle yogurt cups. Why is that? I thought that all plastics were recyclable, especially if they have a recycling symbol on them.

DEAR WISHFUL RECYCLER: *I appreciate your question; recycling can sometimes be confusing. However, all plastics are not collected in the County’s program. Only narrow neck plastic bottles can be recycled with our program. We do not accept yogurt cups, butter containers, plastic take-out containers or other non-bottle plastics. For a full list of what material that can be recycled with our program, please visit: www.miamidade.gov/solidwaste.*

DEAR RECYCLINA: I attended my daughter’s school science fair last week. County Recycling Manager J. Massa spoke on recycling. The presentation was great; I learned so much. She mentioned that hangers do not go into the blue recycle cart. I have so many. What can I do with my metal and plastic hangers?

DEAR HANGER COLLECTOR: *It is not uncommon for us to find plastic and metal hangers in the blue recycling cart. They are not acceptable in our program. Instead, we encourage our customers to return the metal hangers to the dry cleaners. Most dry cleaners will happily accept them. As for the plastic hangers, they can be donated.*

DEAR RECYCLINA: My family and I love pizza. We order pizza at least twice a week. Can we recycle our pizza boxes?

DEAR PIZZA LOVER: *Excellent question! Please do not place your greasy, cheesy or soiled pizza boxes into the recycling cart. Our recycling program only accepts clean cardboard materials. Please place pizza boxes into the green waste cart.*

DEAR RECYCLINA: My closet is quite dated. I have some very nice clothes that I don’t want to wear anymore. Most of my clothes are in good condition. Is it okay for me to toss them into my blue recycling cart? Maybe someone can wear them one day!

DEAR FASHIONISTA: Thank you for this question. Many people think that they can toss their new or used clothing into the blue recycling cart. That action is incorrect! I suggest that you sort through your closet. Decide which items are in good condition, and then donate them to your local thrift store, clothing drive, family member or friend. The clothes that are in bad condition should be thrown out with the garbage.