

Updated: October 2019

Q: Why are plastic bags and wrap no longer allowed in the recycling container?

A: These thin plastics *get tangled in equipment* at recycling facilities, making it harder, or even impossible, to recycle other materials. They also are a main contaminant of the other recyclables.

Q: What can I do with plastic bags and wrap that I already have or may acquire in the future?

A: *There are drop-off locations* at grocery stores and other retail outlets where you can bring plastic bags and wrap. Visit <https://www.plasticfilmrecycling.org> for drop-off locations.

This option keeps the material separated from other recyclables, helps ensure it is clean, and means the materials will be sent to a recycling facility that can turn them into something new, like plastic lumber or other new products.

Q: Can I just throw these materials into the garbage?

A: *Yes.* we understand that sometimes putting the plastic bags and wrap in the garbage is the only option you may have. And whenever plastic bags or wrap are dirty, wet, or, contaminated with food, they should go in the garbage.

Ideally, we want people to reduce the amount of plastic waste they generate by making wise purchasing choices that eliminates unnecessary packaging, and by bringing reusable bags with them when they shop. If you do have plastic bags or wrap, we hope you will use the available drop-off options that can be found at <https://www.plasticfilmrecycling.org>.

Q: How can I reduce my use of plastic bags and wrap?

A: *Bringing reusable bags* when you go grocery or retail shopping is a great way to reduce plastic bag use. You can also decline a plastic bag when shopping and request a paper bag instead. Reducing plastic wrap use can be done by looking for items that are not wrapped in plastic or buying in bulk.

Q: How do we know that these and other materials are actually being recycled?

A: King County and SPU have worked to *ensure that the companies that do collect plastic bags* and wraps through the drop-off program are committed to protecting the environment and recycling these materials. Currently, companies participating in the <https://www.plasticfilmrecycling.org> program process materials that are being sent to TREX to be made into new items like siding or building materials.

Q: What are considered plastic bags and wrap?

A: *Plastic bags are just that – bags made of plastic.*

- While these generally include grocery bags, produce bags, bread bags, zip-top bags, along with shipping pillows and bubble wrap.

Plastic wrap is typically used as packaging for items like paper towels/napkins, toilet paper, and beverages.

- It also includes the plastic that comes around clothes that you pick up from the dry cleaner, and most other thin, flexible plastic. However, only those plastics that are clean, dry, and have not touched food can be collected at the drop-off locations; all other plastic bags and wrap should go into the garbage.

Q: How did this change come into effect? How will it be enforced?

A: The Responsible Recycling Task Force identified removing plastic bags and wrap as one of the best ways to clean up the recycling stream because these materials can be problematic at our recycling facilities that process recyclables for sale. Currently, the region is focusing on ***education and helping customers make the right choice*** on how to recycle right, and not enforcement.

Q: What about companies like RidWell?

A: SPU and King County work with contracted haulers to deliver curbside collection services to our customers. While we know that there are other companies that collect plastic bag and wrap for a fee, we are not involved.

Q: Will SPU have a drop-off location for plastic bags and wrap at the transfer stations?

A: Currently, there is no drop-off location at SPU transfer stations.

Q: What is SPU's role in the drop-off program? Are there other locations coming?

A: SPU has been working with industry and regional partners including King County to expand the drop-off program at retail locations. This will happen in a phased approach including confirming existing sites are set up for drop-off and then encouraging the expansion of new drop-off locations throughout the area to ensure customers have enough access.

Where can customers learn more?

SPU's Recycle Right page for how customers can recycle according to Seattle's requirements:

<http://www.seattle.gov/utilities/services/recycling/recycle-at-home/recycle-right>

SPU's Where Does It Go Lookup Tool is a great resource for finding out how to dispose of items:

<http://www.seattle.gov/util/MyServices/WhereDoesItGo/index.htm>

SPU's Recycling Process Website & Videos:

<http://www.seattle.gov/utilities/services/recycling/recycle-at-home/recycling-process>