



## Frequently Asked Questions

### EVERY-OTHER-WEEK GARBAGE COLLECTION

#### **1. What is the every-other-week garbage collection program?**

The every-other-week garbage collection program is bi-weekly refuse collection for all Tacoma residents living in single-family homes and duplexes. Currently residents receive these services on a weekly basis. With every-other-week garbage collection, customers will receive a container double the capacity of their current container or receive a second container. The volume of garbage collected over the two-week period will remain the same unless the customer chooses to downsize their service to a smaller container. Garbage and recycling will be collected one week and yard/food waste will be collected the following week.

#### **2. Does every-other-week garbage collection apply to commercial customers?**

No, every-other-week garbage collection only applies to residential customers. Commercial businesses and multifamily residences will continue to be picked up weekly.

#### **3. Why is the City switching to every other-week-garbage collection?**

Collecting garbage every-other-week is a more sustainable option with multiple benefits that support the City of Tacoma's strategic goals:

A safe, clean and attractive community

A diverse, productive and sustainable economy

A high- performing, open and engaged government

Every-other-week garbage collection also supports the Solid Waste utility's strategic goals for reducing waste and improving operational efficiency and productivity. Under the Tacoma-Pierce County Solid Waste Management Plan, the City has agreed to divert 70 percent of the municipal solid waste that we currently send to Pierce County's 304th Street Landfill. We currently divert 30 percent of our waste. Based on Every-Other-Week garbage collection and Food Waste Recycling pilot results, the City will realize an increase in waste diversion.

#### **4. What are the benefits?**

- Fewer collection trucks reduce vehicle emissions, fuel consumption and carbon footprint
- Increased collection efficiency (labor, time, maintenance)
- Helps stabilize future solid waste rates
- Helps increase recycling awareness
- Opportunity to move customers into the correct-sized container (right-size)

**5. What is right-sizing of customer’s service levels and why is it so important?**

Every household generates a different amount of garbage based on the size of their family, purchasing activity, consumption patterns, household projects and many other reasons. It’s important for consumers to identify the amount of garbage they generate on a regular basis and select the correct service level for multiple reasons.

- Over-serviced customers can save money if they reduce their container size
- Helps control blight and nuisances
- Supports waste reduction and recycling programs (promotes customers to put waste in the right container)
- Helps control long-term disposal costs

**6. What size container will I receive for every-other-week garbage collection?**

Customers will receive either a larger garbage container or a second same-sized container to accommodate a similar garbage volume during a two-week period. The chart below indicates the standard size container that will automatically replace or be added to their existing service.

Current container size	New EOW container size
20 gallon	45 gallon
30 gallon	60 gallon
60 gallon	Two 60 gallon
90 gallon	Two 90 gallon

**7. Can I request a different size container for every-other-week garbage collection?**

Yes, Solid Waste Management encourages customers to select the right-size container based on the amount of garbage they generate on a regular basis. The chart below lists all service levels offered to solid waste management customers.

Service Levels (EOW Pick Up)
30 gallon
45 gallon
60 gallon
90 gallon
Two 60 gallon
One 60 and One 90 gallon
Two 90 gallon

**8. If you're cutting my service in half, are you cutting my garbage costs in half?**

With every-other-week collection, customers will continue to dispose of the same amount of garbage as before. Each customer will receive a container double in size or a second same-sized container to accommodate the amount of garbage generated over a two week period. The collection frequency will change from weekly pickups to every other week. The cost for every-other-week service will not be cut in half since the same amount of garbage is collected from the customer. However, every-other-week collection will help minimize rate increases in the long term.

Tacoma has a bundled rate for solid waste services. The bundled rate is intended to ensure that all residential customers have access to the same services, and they can choose what services they want to use without paying a separate fee. The bundled rate also funds recycling and yard waste services, Call2Haul (bulky waste collection service), reduced fee garbage dumping at the Transfer station and many other services available to our customers. Because of the bundled rate, the cost savings realized by reducing the frequency of pickup does not allow the utility to reduce rates by half, but it does allow the utility to keep the rates for the smaller cans at 2012 levels for 2013 and 2014.

The rate increases listed below are associated with the phasing in of the volume based rate structure adopted by City Council on December 9, 2008 (effective January 1, 2009).

Service Level (Weekly Pick Up)	2012 Rates	Service Level (EOW Pick Up)	2013 Rates	Difference
		30 Gallon Container	\$18.28	
20 Gallon Container	\$25.25	45Gallon Container	\$27.42*	\$2.17
30 Gallon Container	\$36.55	60 Gallon Container	\$36.55	\$0.00
45Gallon Container		90 Gallon Container	\$54.83	
60 Gallon Container	\$68.50	(2) 60 Gallon Containers	\$70.80	\$2.30
		60 Gallon & 90 Gallon Container	\$91.38	
90 Gallon Container	\$100.65	(2) 90 Gallon Containers	\$105.15	\$4.50

\* Rate includes an increase of 5 additional gallons

With new service levels (30 gallon, 45 gallon and 90 gallon EOW) customers will have more options available to move into the right sized garbage container. The additional container choices offered as part of every-other-week garbage collection, along with the recent addition of the residential food waste recycling program, will allow many customers to reduce their container size and lower costs.

**9. What are volume-based rates and why were they implemented?**

A volume based rate is a structure with a variable rate based on the number and volume of customers' garbage containers. This rate structure incentivizes customers to produce less waste and recycle more which allows customers to use a smaller volume container and pay less. The City of Tacoma's residential garbage rate also pays for many other services, such as disposal of the waste collected, curbside recycling and yard waste programs, reduced fee garbage disposal at the landfill, no-fee yard waste recycling at the landfill, Call-2-Haul, household hazardous

waste disposal, taxes and most of the other residential solid waste programs that are offered. Other program costs are not changing, so the efficiencies gained will help reduce future rate increases but will not greatly impact the current rate structure.

**10. Will EOW collection result in reductions in the workforce?**

As a result of the implementation of every-other-week garbage collection, five positions were eliminated from the 2013-2014 Solid Waste Management biennium budget.

**11. When will the program come to my neighborhood?**

Solid Waste Management will begin a phased implementation of the program starting in March 2013. Customers will receive advance notice by mail and phone as to when collection specific to their home will change. Below is the timeline for delivery of containers to the neighborhoods by collection day. The schedule is subject to change.

Collection Day	Date
Monday South	March 4 – 8
Monday North	March 25 – 29
Friday North	April 26 – May 2
Friday South	May 17 – 23
Tuesday South	June 25 – July 1
Tuesday North	July 16 – 22
Wednesday South	August 21 – 27
Wednesday North	September 11 – 17
Thursday South	October 17 – 23
Thursday North	November 7 – 13

**12. Will my garbage collection day change when we switch to every-other-week garbage collection?**

The majority of customers will continue to have their garbage collected on the same day of the week but picked up every-other-week. Approximately 14% of customers will change collection day to allow Solid Waste Management to more efficiently collect garbage and better service all customers. Customers whose collection day will change will be notified by mail with a new collection schedule.

**13. With the increase in container sizes, how will elderly and disabled customers manage moving their larger container(s)?**

Solid Waste Management will work closely with elderly and disabled customer to develop a collection system that works best for both the customer and staff. This may include using smaller containers, placing containers in a more convenient location for pick up and/or providing a carry service for our customers.

#### **14. Will every-other-week garbage collection increase public health issues and the potential for odors and pest nuisances?**

The every-other-week garbage collection program is based on a six-month pilot program from summer 2011 through winter 2012 in two areas of Tacoma. During that time, there were very few odor complaints related to the every other week collection of garbage. Customers are expected to use plastic bags to contain garbage, which greatly reduces the potential for odors. Several other communities including Renton, University Place, Bellingham and Olympia are using every-other-week collection and they do not report an increase in public health issues as compared to weekly garbage collection. Food waste collection in the yard waste container is offered on the opposite week of garbage collection to ensure that food waste can be disposed or recycled every week.

Although odors and pests were not a problem during the pilot study, here are some tips to minimize them:

- Bag and tie closed your garbage
- Keep the garbage can lid closed
- Place container(s) in a shaded area during warm weather months
- Dispose of food waste weekly (yard waste collected opposite week of garbage)
- Diapers, pet waste or other especially odorous material: Bag prior to placing in larger garbage bag or double bag separately. Pet waste may be disposed of in the toilet.

#### **15. Who should I contact with additional questions?**

City of Tacoma Solid Waste Management:

(M-F, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.)

(253) 591-5543

[solidwaste@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:solidwaste@cityoftacoma.org)

Updated information will be posted on the web at [www.TacomaRecycles.org/everyotherweek](http://www.TacomaRecycles.org/everyotherweek)