

City of Newton



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
DIVISION OF SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS MANAGEMENT
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton Centre, MA 02459-1449

September 26, 2018

Dear Newton Resident:

We need your help.

The City of Newton's recycling contains 18% contamination. Contractually, the City is required to have a contamination rate of less than 10%. As a result, the City was charged \$6,120 in fines last month and we have paid \$65,611 in fines so far in 2018. This is a direct impact Newton is facing due to the global recycling markets downturn you may have heard about this year.

The City of Newton is embarking on a focused initiative to educate our residents and lower our contamination rate. We received a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection to fund a robust education campaign, help us inspect what's in the recycling carts and to communicate that information to residents.

Beginning next week, on Monday, October 1, we will be performing **curbside inspections** of residential recycling carts. Contaminated carts will **first receive a warning and specific feedback** on what issue was found.

If, after a warning is issued, a cart is found to again contain contamination, **it will not be collected that week**. A tag indicating the issue found will be left on the cart handle and we will also send a follow up letter. Once the issue has been corrected, the cart will be collected the following week.

We know that recycling has become increasingly complex in recent years and that our education efforts have not been effective in keeping up with this growing complexity.

Contamination in our recycling typically comes in two forms:

- 1) Materials that belong in the green cart but are not prepared correctly. For example, contamination occurs when there is still food in a plastic container or a half-filled bottle of juice. Containers should be empty and clean (just a quick rinse) before being placed in the green cart.

- 2) Materials that do not belong in the green cart. The most common contaminant is plastic bags. Other contaminants include other plastic film (such as the wrap around a case of bottled water), food, liquids, textiles, toys and electronics.

The only materials that belong in the green cart are empty bottles, jars, and containers made of metal, plastic and glass from the kitchen, laundry and bath, and paper and flattened cardboard.

We believe deeply in diverting waste whenever possible to lessen our environmental footprint. But, unless you are absolutely certain that something is recyclable in the green cart, put it in the trash instead. Think – **"When in doubt, throw it out!"**

Please contact me if you have any questions about this new initiative. I know it will be difficult for you if we reject your cart because of contaminated materials and we don't pick it up for a week.

For more information about how to recycle correctly, check out the mobile *Recycle Right Newton* app or get information at our website: www.newtonma.gov/recycling. Additionally, please find the enclosed brochure describing Newton's curbside guidelines.

Thank you for your help and your commitment to a more sustainable Newton.

Sincerely,



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P.S. Excess recyclables can be taken to the Newton Resource Recovery Center at 115 Rumford Avenue in Auburndale.