

## COG Refuse and Recycling Contract

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### Why did we change haulers?

- Pennsylvania law allows Class 2 Townships to have a contract with a trash hauler for a maximum of 5 years, so we had to enter into a new contract before the 2020-2025 contract expired.
- PA requires a competitive procurement process for municipal contracts over \$23,200. Competitive procurement includes Requests for Bids and Requests for Proposals. We utilized a Request for Proposals (RFP) process because it provided us with the opportunity to combine different services to achieve the lowest prices.
- We received 2 proposals through the competitive Request for Proposals process: WM (Waste Management) and Burgmeier's Hauling.
- Both proposals included similar services (automated cart collection, bulk waste limited to 2 items twice each year). Only Burgmeier's proposal included the collection of bulk recyclables (appliances, electronics, and tires), Christmas tree collection, and the collection of extra items or excess trash every week.
- The RFP process allows us to outsource some services. We will outsource billing and related customer service to the Centre County Recycling and Refuse Authority (CCRRA).
- Combining the services from Burgmeier's and CCRRA gave us monthly costs between \$28 and \$31 per month. The WM proposal costs were between \$34.45 and \$38.45 for fewer and lower levels of services.

#### Why is the cost increasing?

- Costs for the collection, processing, and disposal of waste have increased dramatically in the state and nation over the past several years. The drivers of this increase include salary demands (all drivers must have a CDL), insurance costs, and equipment costs, all of which have seen sharp increases. Our 2020-2025 contract held fees for residents fairly constant, so your fees were not previously impacted by the increases across the industry.
- Some contracts in Pennsylvania increased by as much as 100%, with several in contracts similar to ours reaching as high as \$58 per month.

#### What is changing?

- The Collection process is changing from "hand collection" to "automated collection" using hauler-owned carts. We did not receive proposals nor requests from proposers for "hand collection" which is what we have currently.
- Cart sizes will replace bag limits.
- Excess items next to carts will be collected for \$4 per item.
- You will need to schedule the collection of your large Bulk Waste items and your Bulk Recyclables.
- You are limited to scheduling the collection of large bulk waste items (2 item limit) to twice per year.
- You are limited to scheduling the collection of bulk recyclable items (2 item limit) to twice per year. Bulk recyclables include appliances, tires (4 car tires – 1 item), and covered electronic devices (televisions, computers, printers).
- Collection will be scheduled within 2 weeks of your request.
- The Centre County Recycling and Refuse Authority (CCRRA) will continue to collect your recycling curbside in the red bins.
- The CCRRA will be sending your invoices and providing customer service. You can pay as you always have, or you can actually drop your payments off at their office.

#### Why is Bulk Waste changing?

We did not require that haulers propose unlimited bulk waste collection two weeks per year because it is a very labor-intensive and expensive process and therefore excludes “smaller” companies. We left it up to the companies proposing on the contract to come up with a schedule and process, and neither expressed any interest in the old schedule and “anything goes” model. We know from the 2023 survey results and from driving around on bulk waste week that most residents do not put out all that much, especially of larger items. It’s therefore a matter of equity: most people were paying for the collection and disposal of large amounts of material from just a few properties. Finally, the other proposal excluded bulk recyclables, so that proposal offered an even greater decrease in services (also no Christmas tree collection) for a higher cost.

Won’t changing the bulk waste collection from “everything goes” two weeks per year to the new model increase illegal dumping?

The research says not. First, residents can put smaller bulk items in their carts every week. We know from driving around during bulk waste weeks and from our 2023 survey results that very few houses had more than one or two large items out, and all that small stuff can go in the carts. Second, it’s on-demand so it will be gone when you need it to be rather than waiting until that week in May or October. Third, residents can pay a small fee to have the hauler pick up an item set beside the cart, a much more convenient option than driving around looking for an abandoned lot or an easy dumpster in the middle of the night. Fourth, illegal dumping is not the work of folks in single-family homes with regular refuse and bulk waste collection and options for the disposal of old couches and washing machines. There have always been “dumpers” from outside the area or from buildings without options for bulk waste who took advantage of our bulk waste weeks to dump their furniture and construction debris near “our” stuff, thereby increasing the cost for all of us.

What about the “pickers” who go around during bulk waste week picking out metals and useful furniture for reuse or recycling?

- It is important to note that it is a violation of the townships’ code of ordinances to take any recyclables from residents’ curbside piles.
- There have been repeated problems with these “pickers” leaving messes behind after they have sorted through piles.
- Many residents do not want others sorting through their waste or coming on their property.

Still, it’s only 4 items per year. Won’t that be a problem for many people?

It’s 4 large bulk items per year. And 4 of the recyclable category: appliances, tires, televisions, computers.

What if I have more stuff than that I want to get rid of?

The hauler will schedule special pick ups at any time. Moreover, here in the Centre Region we have goals to reduce our solid waste being sent to the landfill in both the COG Climate Action and Adaptation Plan and the County Solid Waste Management Plan. Therefore, we encourage residents to explore re-use options by finding someone who wants that old dryer or donating that recliner. We have put together a list of resources to help you dispose of your materials without sending them to a landfill. Find those resources at [www.crcog.net/refuse](http://www.crcog.net/refuse)

Why automated cart collection?

This is really the more common, safer, and more efficient method of collecting refuse in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Driving a refuse truck requires a CDL, and it has become increasingly problematic to find drivers with CDLs willing to get out of the truck and pick up bags of trash from over 580 households per day. It is so much safer for drivers that automated collection often means lower insurance and workers’ comp costs for the

company. That means lower costs for residents. Finally, it actually leaves our streets cleaner as it limits interference from vectors (birds & animals that tear open bags).

What are the three cart sizes?

95-gallon cart: holds 6 fully filled garbage bags.

65-gallon cart: holds 4 fully filled garbage bags

35-gallon cart: holds 2 fully filled garbage bags

If you want to see how big these are for yourself, we have some set up for you around Centre Region and Benner Township. You will receive information on where you can see these carts and how to make your selection sometime over the next several months.

Why is there so little cost difference between the three sizes of carts?

It costs the same amount for the truck to come out to your house no matter how much they pick up. That cost includes equipment, labor, insurance, fuel, invoicing you, and the cart itself. The difference is in the cost of disposing of the trash. At \$85/ton, the cost difference between 95-gallons and 65-gallons of trash is really quite small.

When will I get my cart and what will it cost me?

Your cart will be delivered to your home before the start of the contract. These are hauler-owned carts so there is no cost to you for the cart. By the way, the cart has an identification tag in it that is read by the truck when it is collected, so we know whose cart it is and if that address was serviced.

What can I do with my old garbage can?

We're going to be collecting those for free and recycling them if possible. We'll publish those dates in the newspaper and in other materials you will receive as we start the new contract.

What if I have more garbage than that every week?

If you recycle everything you can curbside (which, by the way, you are mandated to do by township ordinance), you're less likely to have that problem. But if you do need space for more trash every week, you can get a second can for an additional cost per month, dependent on the size of the second can you need.

How can I get door service?

This service is only available for households where everyone in the household qualifies for accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or the townships have approved door service for age-related safety concerns. You will need to apply for door service. We will provide details on that process soon.

What if I do not want to use a cart?

All residents will need to use a cart to allow the refuse to be collected by the automated arm. If you have a special circumstance that precludes the use of a wheeled cart, you will need to apply for that exemption. We will provide details on that process soon. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis and will be informed primarily by concerns for residents' safety.

Who must have an account with the new hauler?

All single-family homes and all apartments, condos, or townhomes in buildings of four or fewer units must have an account with the contracted hauler. Many multiunit buildings, such as condos and townhomes, choose to have curbside residential collection. The only other option is to have dumpsters.

Is anyone exempt from this service?

Yes. Farms of 10 or more acres are exempt. Houses where the use is now commercial are also exempt, but they must have some kind of trash collection by municipal ordinance. Similarly, buildings with 5 or more units may choose to have a dumpster and recycling carts rather than curbside collection.

What if I don't live there?

The Centre Region COG townships all require that every residence have refuse service, and that all buildings of 4 or fewer units (including single-family homes, condominiums, and townhomes) have an account with the contracted hauler. The Centre Region COG has a vacancy policy that provides credit for one quarter per year for part-time residences. Additional quarter credits are only available if an unexpected event has caused the resident to leave the home.