

## **Emory University 2018 Waste Police Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

November 17, 2017

### **1. What is the new Emory waste policy I have been hearing about?**

Emory's [2025 Sustainability Vision](#) sets the goal of 95% diversion of waste from landfills, and in 2016 Emory hired national experts to help develop a plan for achieving this goal. These experts recommended all units of Emory University, including Oxford College, remove servicing of desk-side waste bins, add more uniform sets of recycling and composting bins in convenient interior spaces, and remove landfill as an option for outdoor spaces. The [Emory Waste Policy](#) was developed by Emory's Waste Think Thank, made up of experts in a variety of Emory departments, and is supported by the President's Leadership Council, the University Senate, and unit Deans. The policy is being jointly implemented by Campus Services and the Office of Sustainability Initiatives.

### **2. Why is Emory adopting this program?**

Emory's Zero Landfill Waste initiative seeks to reduce the harmful environmental and social impacts of landfills. In addition to the methane produced by landfills – a powerful greenhouse gas – metro Atlanta landfills pose threats to human health, particularly for surrounding communities. Pollution from frequent trucks affect air quality and increase the risk for respiratory-related illnesses, harmful wastes can find their way into the groundwater and drinking water, and landfills generate odor, vermin, noise, and lowered property values. These issues disproportionately impact the historically disadvantaged communities in which landfills are located. Emory's goal to divert 95% of waste from landfills by 2025 will reduce these environmental and social harms.

### **3. Is there any evidence that asking employees to service their own desk-side waste works?**

Research shows that self-sorting our own waste increases recycling and composting rates, and decreases the total amount of waste generated. Emory custodians do not sort desk-side waste into recycling and compost bins, and in order to meet Emory's goal of 95% landfill diversion by 2025, desk-side waste must be sorted. Expert consultants conducted a waste audit and discovered that 67% of Emory's landfill waste belongs in compost bins, more than 20% belongs in recycle bins, and less than 10% of Emory's landfill stream actually belongs in the landfill. Desk-side self-service programs are in place at universities, companies, and municipalities nationwide, and effectively increase recycling and composting rates and reduce the amount of waste going to landfills.

- The [Ontario city government and the San Jose city government](#) reduced their waste and garbage service by 50% and have saved \$11,000 annually on garbage collection

- [Dartmouth College](#) reduced the amount of trash it sent to landfills by 200 tons in 2010, the first year of its desk side self-service program
- [Sonoma State University](#) increased its recyclable office waste by nearly 100 tons, and increased its recycling rate by 55% within one year of implementing desk-side self service
- [University of North Carolina at Charlotte](#) increased recycling by 15% and eliminated 16,000 trash can liners from the supply chain and waste stream in 2011, the first year of its desk-side self-service program
- [University of Minnesota at Duluth](#) reduced the amount of waste sent landfills by nearly 20% and eliminated an estimated 130,000 trash can liners from its supply chain and waste stream in 2014, the first year of its desk-side self-service program
- Other AAU (Association of American Universities) member schools have desk-side self-service programs, including but not limited to Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Penn State University, University of Colorado Boulder, and University of Kansas. Schools that are not AAU members with desk-side self-service programs include, but are not limited to, Appalachian State University, Clarkson University, Mills College, Portland Community College, Portland State University, Swarthmore College, and Syracuse University.
- Approximately 45 research laboratories at Emory recycle and compost materials and self-service their bins.

#### **4. Custodians will no longer be emptying my desk-side trash every day? What will they be doing?**

Servicing of desk-side waste or recycling bins by Campus Services' staff will be discontinued in January 2018. Emory staff and faculty may keep a bin or other container at their desk, which they can use to transport their disposables to designated collection areas to self-sort their waste materials into the compost and recycling stations located conveniently throughout every building. Custodial positions will not be eliminated; rather, a select group will become dedicated recycling and composting specialists, and custodial staff will spend more time cleaning and maintaining Emory's office spaces and common areas.

#### **5. Will my desk-side bin be removed or can I keep it to hold my waste materials?**

Your desk-side bin will NOT be removed; however, custodians will no longer service your desk-side bin. You can keep it in order to hold waste materials at your desk temporarily until you are ready to bring your waste to a convenient waste collection area for sorting. Please do not keep any food or food-soiled waste in a desk-side bin overnight in order to avoid pests and odor. You may also remove your desk side bin altogether if you wish.

#### **6. If I chose to keep a desk-side bin, where do I empty it?**

You can sort the contents of your desk-side bin into the standardized recycling and compost bins that will be located at convenient collection areas found throughout every Emory building starting in January 2018.

**7. Why do I have to empty my own trash? It's not in my job description.**

Studies show that self-sorting of waste leads to reductions in the overall amount of waste generated and increases recycling rates. Desk-side servicing leads to higher rates of contamination and more landfilled waste, including from the disposal of desk side trash can plastic liners, which will be eliminated from Emory's supply chain and landfill waste stream as a result of this change in service. We can all do our part to help Emory reach our landfill diversion goal by properly sorting and disposing of our desk-side waste. Please view this 3-minute video in which President Sterk calls on all of us to do our part:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLbrs3hb\\_w&t=4s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLbrs3hb_w&t=4s)

**8. How far away will I have to carry my desk-side waste to one of the standard waste stations?**

Campus Services is working with building occupants to determine the most convenient locations for interior waste stations. Waste stations will be placed in hallways, kitchens/break rooms, outside of laboratories, and other convenient locations.

**9. If I have mobility challenges that make me unable to carry my desk-side waste to a convenient waste station, what should I do?**

Contact Campus Services Customer Service at 404.727.7463 or [cscsc@emory.edu](mailto:cscsc@emory.edu) to submit a request for desk-side service to continue.

**10. What about the smell or mess from food left in my desk side bin?**

It is advised that any discarded food items be taken directly to a centralized composting container to prevent any office odor or pest issues. To keep a desk-side bin clean, it is recommended that you periodically wipe out the bin with a damp paper towel.

**11. Why aren't we provided with liners for the desk-side bin?**

One University reports that eliminating desk-side waste service and the need to purchase can liners diverts nearly 15,000 pounds of plastic from landfills, totaling almost fifteen metric tons of CO2 annually (which is like taking three cars off the road for one year or growing 389 tree seedlings for ten years). If you would like to avoid soiling your desk-side bin with food waste or other leaky waste, you can dispose of these items directly in the central standardized recycling and composting bins.

**12. Can I bring my own plastic bag to line my desk-side bin?**

Plastic bags can get stuck in the machinery at recycling facilities, so their use is discouraged. We recommend repurposing paper bags as liners and placing them in the compost bin for disposal, or not using a liner at all. If you do choose to use a plastic bag, please recycle it when necessary in the plastics/metals bin.

**13. A lot of unsanitary items are placed in my desk-side wastebasket (used tissues, old food waste, etc.) by my guests. Will I be provided with any personal protective equipment (such as disposable gloves) to use while sorting the waste in my desk-side bin?**

Used tissues and food waste are compostable. It is recommended that you do not encourage disposal of these items at your desk and request that others bring those items to the central collection areas for composting. Emory will not provide personal protective equipment such as gloves to wear during waste sorting in order to avoid the generation of additional plastic waste.

**14. Who will service the waste in common areas of buildings, such as kitchens, conference rooms, and lobbies?**

Emory's Campus Services staff will continue to service all waste bins that are not desk-side, including recycling, compost, and landfill materials placed throughout the building and in common areas. These bins will be serviced daily for Landfill and Compost materials, and as needed for recycling materials.

**15. What happened to the old trash can that was in the hall?**

Campus Services will remove landfill bins that do not conform to the new standard. All landfill bins must be purchased by Campus Services and placed alongside recycling and compost containers in

designated waste stations. Landfill bins will not be placed alone in any location, and individuals and departments must not purchase their own landfill bins.

**16. How can I get a set of new recycling and compost bins for my building?**

Emory Campus Services is providing new and retrofitted equipment, labels, and signs for all Emory buildings, and is working with building occupants to determine the convenient locations for the placement of interior bins. Exterior bins are being replaced in late fall 2017-early winter 2018 by Campus Services.

**17. Can I get a compost bin for my office?**

No. All University buildings will be provided standardized bins in convenient locations throughout the building, which will include a compost bin. Compost bins will not be provided to individual offices. You may keep a small container at your desk for compostable items if you choose, but no desk-side containers will be serviced by Campus Services staff.

**18. Why does Emory compost food waste from kitchens, events, consumer leftovers, and paper towels, in addition to animal bedding from research labs?**

The results of the 2015-2016 audit of Emory's waste streams by external consultants show that 67% of Emory's landfill stream is compostable materials. When food is deposited into landfills, it decomposes and creates methane, one of the most powerful greenhouse gas emissions. Globally, food waste is responsible for roughly 8% of greenhouse gas emissions. On the other hand, composting food waste contributes to carbon sequestration in soils and turns Emory's wasted food into another usable product: soil for growing our food. In FY2016, Emory composted 930 tons of food waste and animal bedding, and Emory Campus Kitchens collected 3,122 pounds of leftover food from Emory events, delivering 2,601 meals to hungry people at The Women's Kitchen at Grace United Methodist Church and Mercy Community Church. Together, these efforts prevented 278 MT CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions from being emitted, which is the same as taking 59.5 vehicles off the road for one year or growing 7,205 tree seedlings for ten years.

**19. How can Emory's compost stream handle bones, dairy, bread, and cooked food?**

Unlike home composting, Emory uses a commercial compost facility that gets composted materials to very high temperatures, allowing for the break down of animal products like meat and dairy, and cooked food. We can place all leftover food and food-soiled paper into compost bins.

**20. Does compost result in more bugs and odors?**

Emory began composting in 2014 in many University buildings, and there is no evidence this resulted in more bugs or odors. Food items were previously placed in landfill bins; therefore the sorting of food into compost does not change the materials being collected, only the bin into which items are placed. Interior compost and landfill bins will continue to be serviced daily to prevent buildup of food inside buildings.

**21. We hold lots of pizza parties. What should we do with used pizza boxes?**

Used pizza boxes can be either composted or recycled. If soiled with lots of leftover food or melted cheese, place pizza boxes and their food contents into the COMPOST bin. If relatively clean, place pizza boxes into the MIXED PAPER bin. All food soiled paper products should be placed into the COMPOST bin.

**22. Into which bin should we place items that have mixed materials, such as writing pens, bubble-lined envelopes, binder clips, and other office supplies?**

Items with mixed materials should be placed in the PLASTICS & METALS bin. If you are not sure where an item goes, default to PLASTICS & METALS. Emory's recycling center pre-sorts materials before they are picked up by the vendor, and the vendors pre-sort before materials before they are recycled. Therefore, a few misplaced items will not ruin the load.

**23. What should I do with the waste from single-use coffee machines?**

Single-use coffee machines (like Keurig and Flavia) create problematic waste and increase energy use, and their purchase with Emory funds is discouraged. If single-use coffee machines are present, please do not place waste into Emory's recycling stream; rather, utilize the recycling programs that the manufacturers offer.

**24. Is this program affecting all buildings at Emory?**

Yes. All University buildings on Emory's main campus, Oxford campus, and Grady that are currently serviced by Campus Services will be equipped with standardized recycling and composting bins, and desk-side waste service will end in January 2018.

**25. Will Emory research and teaching labs participate in the waste policy?**

Yes. All University buildings with laboratories will receive standard collection stations in convenient locations, with the addition of a glass recycling stream. Labs will self-service recyclable materials from inside labs into convenient collection stations outside the lab in the hall. Labs that participate in the [Green Labs at Emory certification program](#) will receive a complimentary set of recycling bins for inside the lab.

All labs must still dispose of regulated materials in the same manner as before, as enforced by Emory's Environmental Health and Safety Office. However, some materials previously destined for landfill bins might now be recyclable. Please consult the detailed [Lab Recycling Protocol](#) for more information.

**26. How can I plan events that comply with Emory's Waste Policy and support our Zero Landfill Waste by 2025 goal?**

Emory's [Certified Sustainable Events program](#) outlines ways to plan Zero Landfill Waste events at Emory, and gives certification and recognition to event planners and departments that participate. Events catered by Emory Catering are always Zero Landfill Waste. When using America to Go caterers, look for the Zero Landfill Waste icon next to caterers that support Emory's Zero Landfill Waste program by providing serving materials that are compostable or recyclable at Emory.

**27. How can I request a presentation to my department, lab, or office?**

Contact Emory's Office of Sustainability Initiatives at [emorysustainability@emory.edu](mailto:emorysustainability@emory.edu) to request a presentation to your department, office or lab.

**28. Where should I go or whom should I ask if I have more questions about my desk-side bin and recycling/composting at Emory?**

For questions about bins and operational issues such as waste, recycling, and compost collection, contact Emory Auxiliary Services at 404.727.9275 or at [deena.keeler@emory.edu](mailto:deena.keeler@emory.edu). For questions

regarding the policy or sustainability goals and initiatives, contact Emory's Office of Sustainability Initiatives at 404.727.9916 or at [emorysustainability@emory.edu](mailto:emorysustainability@emory.edu).

**29. How will outreach and education about the zero landfill waste policy and goals be shared with the Emory community?**

[Emory Zero Waste Ambassadors](#) are Emory community members who are committed to promoting a post-landfill future that takes into account the health and well-being of surrounding communities and future generations. The Zero Waste Ambassadors will be holding outreach and education programs throughout the University.

Emory's Sustainability Representatives are also leading outreach and education efforts on Emory's Zero Landfill Waste initiative. They represent every major building on campus and many major departments. Find your building's [Sustainability Representative](#) at this link to seek ways to be involved in sustainability at your department or building level.

**30. How will we know that the program is working?**

Emory measures and tracks its waste from year to year. More information can be found on the [Emory Recycles Website](#).

**31. How can I get more involved in sustainability at Emory?**

Visit the [Office of Sustainability Initiatives website](#) to learn more about our work and how to get involved.

[Sign up](#) for the Emory Office of Sustainability Initiatives weekly newsletter to stay informed and learn how to get involved.

**Bibliography**

Binder, Katherine J. "The Effects of Replacing Dispersed Trash and Recycling Bins with

Integrated Waste Receptacles on the Accuracy of Waste Sorting in an Academic

Building." Kalamazoo, Western Michigan University, 2012,

<https://wmich.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/Kate%20Binder%20Thesis.pdf>.

Accessed 19 Sept. 2017.

Brothers, Kevin J., Patricia J. Krantz, and Lynn E. McClannahan. "Office Paper Recycling: A Function of

- Container Proximity." *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1994, pp. 153-60.
- Cole, Elaine J. "A Community-Based Social Marketing Campaign to Green the Offices at Pacific University: Recycling, Paper reduction and Environmentally Preferable Purchasing". Dissertation, Antioch University, 2007.
- Czajkowski, Mikolaj, Tadeusz Kadziela, and Nick Hanley. "We want to sort! Assessing households' preferences for sorting waste." *Resource and Energy Economics*, vol. 36, 2014, pp. 290-306.
- Hatley, Devin. "University of North Carolina Charlotte Waste Reduction." Charlotte, National Wildlife Federation, 2012.
- Levin, Victoria. *Using Benchmarking to Minimize Common DOE Waste Streams*. Sandia National Laboratories, 1995.
- Mansfield III, William H. "Taking the University to Task." *WorldWatch*, June 1998, pp. 24-30.
- Muilenburg, Dennis, and Ursula English. *Build Something Cleaner: The Boeing Company 2016 Environmental Report*. Seattle: The Boeing Company. Print.
- Platt, Brenda. *Mini Trash Bins Help Office Settings Reduce Waste 50 Percent and More: A Model for Local Government Recycling and Waste Reduction*. Santa Cruz, University of California at Santa Cruz, 2002.
- Smith, Colin. "Toting an Idea: A Practical Ideal Model for the Design and Distribution of Personal Recycling Containers for Multi-family Dwelling (MFD) Tenants". MA thesis, Texas State University, 2014.
- "Trash Buddy FAQs." *Tufts University Facilities Services Department*, Tufts University, operations.tufts.edu/facilities/recycling/trash-buddy-faq/#13. Accessed 19 Sept. 2017.
- Ummat, Naina. "Promoting Waste Diversion through Site Specific Waste Bin Standards." Halifax, Dalhousie University, 2013, [divertns.ca/assets/files/FINAL-REPORT-Promoting-Waste-Diversion-through-Site-Specific-Waste-Bin-Standards-Dalhousie-](http://divertns.ca/assets/files/FINAL-REPORT-Promoting-Waste-Diversion-through-Site-Specific-Waste-Bin-Standards-Dalhousie-)

University-Case-Study\_compressed-2.pdf. Accessed 18 Sept. 2017.

York, Liz. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2014 Annual Sustainability Report*. Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Print.