

Emory University Waste Police Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

February 2019

1. What is Emory's Waste Policy?

Emory's [2025 Sustainability Vision](#) set the goal to divert 95% of waste from landfills, and in 2016 Emory hired national experts to help develop a plan achieve 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 recycle and compost 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 jointly implemented by Campus Services and the Office of Sustainability Initiatives.

2. Why did Emory adopt this program?

Emory's Zero Landfill Waste initiative seeks to reduce the harmful environmental, social, and economic 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 increases 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 reduces these environmental and social harms.

3. Is this program affecting all buildings at Emory University?

Yes. All University buildings on Emory's Druid Hills campus, Oxford campus, and Grady that are currently serviced by Campus Services are equipped with standard recycle and compost bins, and desk-side waste service ended in January 2018.

4. What is the 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. Custodians do not sort desk-side waste into recycling and compost bins, therefore all desk-side waste was previously going to the landfill. 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. Successful desk-side self-service programs are in place at other universities, companies, and municipalities nationwide:

- 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 to 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, a program in place since 2015.

5. If custodians do not empty my desk-side trash every day, what do they do?

Servicing of desk-side waste or recycling bins by Campus Services was discontinued in January 2018. Custodial positions are not eliminated. Instead, custodial staff spend more time cleaning and maintaining Emory's office spaces and common areas and a select group is dedicated recycling and composting specialists.

6. Can I keep my desk-side bin to hold my waste materials?

Desk-side bins were not removed, therefore you can keep it to hold waste materials at your desk temporarily until you are ready to bring your waste to a convenient waste collection stations 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.

7. If I choose 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 have been located at convenient collection stations found throughout every Emory building since January 2018.

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

Emory employees must abide by Emory policies. We can all do our part to reach Emory's 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

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 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?

Please discard food items directly to compost bin in the nearest waste station to prevent any office odor or pest issues. To keep a desk-side bin clean, periodically wipe out the bin with a damp paper towel.

11. Why aren't liners provided 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 per year, 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 or other leaky waste, dispose of these items directly in the standardized recycling and composting bins.

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

Plastic bags get stuck in the machinery at recycling facilities, so please do not use them. 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. Sometimes unsanitary items are placed in my desktide 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 guests bring those items to the convenient waste station compost bin. Emory does not provide personal protective equipment such as gloves to wear during waste sorting in order to avoid the generation of additional plastic waste. If you bring and use your own gloves, remember that many Emory facilities are latex-free, and used gloves should be placed into the Plastics & Metals bin.

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

Emory's Campus Services staff services all waste bins that are not desk-side, including recycle, compost, and landfill materials placed throughout the building and in common areas. These bins are serviced daily for landfill and compost materials and as needed for recycle materials.

Notice: You can report bins that need to be serviced by contacting Emory Auxiliary Services at 404.727.9275 or recycling@emory.edu.

15. How should we sort waste in conference rooms?

Emory's Zero Landfill Waste goals apply to all conference rooms. Large conference rooms with 25 seats or more may have five standard bins for recycle, compost, and landfill, located within the conference space. If spaces do not allow for the five standard bins, a dual-stream set-up with compost and recycle bins is installed, or a five standard bin set is located conveniently outside the room.

Small conference rooms with fewer than 25 seats have signage directing occupants to convenient collection stations where five standard bins are located. Conference room occupants are responsible for sorting their own waste into compost and recycle bins.

16. Why are there no trash cans in the hall?

There are no landfill bins that do not conform to the new standard. All landfill bins are purchased by Campus Services and placed alongside recycle and compost containers in standard waste stations. Landfill bins are not placed alone in any location and individuals and departments may not purchase their own landfill bins.

17. What happens if a room is too small to hold all 5 bins for recycle, compost, and landfill?

Some small rooms cannot accommodate all five bins, and in this case either no bins are present, or a dual-stream set-up is installed. These dual-stream set-ups include a compost bin and a recycle bin where all recyclables are placed together. Dual stream set-ups do not include a landfill bin. Custodial staff service waste from small rooms that contain dual-stream bins.

18. Why type of bins will be placed in small copy rooms and mail rooms?

If copy rooms and mail rooms are too small to hold the five standard bins, a dual-stream recycle set-up of white paper and mixed paper is installed. Dual-streams set-ups do not include a landfill bin. Custodial staff are responsible for servicing waste from small copy and mail rooms that contain dual-stream bins.

19. What is proper protocol for large office cleanouts?

Contact Campus Services Customer Service at 404.727.7463 or cscsc@emory.edu to submit a request to have large bins delivered and serviced rather than overloading the interior bins.

20. How should we sort waste in restrooms?

Restroom waste consists primarily of paper towels, therefore landfill bins are not present in restrooms. All paper towels and used tissues go into the green compost bin. Personal hygiene waste should be placed in the designated boxes in bathroom stalls. Medical waste such as needles should be taken home or placed into red regulated waste bins. Campus Services custodial staff is responsible for servicing waste from restrooms.

If your bathroom needs any of these bins, please contact Campus Services Customer Service at 404.727.7463 or cscsc@emory.edu.

21. What type of bins are placed in classrooms, and who is responsible for servicing classroom bins?

Classrooms may contain five standard bins, or they may contain dual-stream bins for recycle and compost, or they may not have bins at all, depending on the needs of the building. Students are expected to bring their waste to the nearest standard waste station, whether in the classroom or in a convenient location outside the classroom. Custodians service these bins.

22. How can I get a set of new recycle and compost bins for my building?

Emory Campus Services provides new and retrofitted equipment, labels, and signs for all Emory buildings and works with building occupants to determine the convenient locations for the placement of interior bins. Exterior bins were replaced from late fall 2017 to early winter 2018 by Campus Services.

23. Can I get a compost bin for my office?

No. All University buildings are provided with standardized bins in convenient locations throughout the building, which includes a compost bin. Compost bins are not 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.

24. 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 other usable products. In FY2016, Emory composted 930 tons of food waste and animal bedding, and Emory Food Chain 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 metric tonnes of CO₂e emissions, which is the same as taking 59.5 vehicles off the road for one year or growing 7,205 tree seedlings for ten years.

25. What should we place in the compost bin?

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. Green compostable cutlery can also be composted. It is colored green so that our composting vendor can effectively differentiate the compostable utensils from plastic. The green utensils are available for purchase through EcoProducts.

26. Does compost result in more bugs and odors?

Emory began composting in 2014 in many University buildings and there is no evidence that this resulted in more bugs or odors. Food items were previously placed in landfill bins, so 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 are serviced and cleaned daily to prevent buildup of food inside buildings. It is recommended that food be placed into Compost bins as soon as possible, and not left overnight at work stations.

27. Can I drop off compost material in the Emory green bins if I live in the Emory community but am not affiliated with Emory?

Unfortunately, we cannot allow alumni or others in the community to use our bins for liability and cost reasons. It is expensive for Emory to compost, and our compost must be placed in specific Emory-supplied bags.

28. Where are the Hard to Recycle Materials stations located?

Most major buildings have a location designated for Hard to Recycle Materials. The closest location is listed on the small, orange sign located at each standard collection station. If you do not see a location listed on this orange sign, please contact Emory Auxiliary Services at 404.727.9275 or at deena.keeler@emory.edu.

For locations of all hard-to-recycle Materials Stations, please view the [sustainability map](#).

29. What should we place in the Hard to Recycle Materials Stations?

Each Hard to Recycle Materials Station has a container for the following items:

- Ink & toner cartridges – all products and manufacturers accepted
- Glass – all glass bottles and items of any color. No Pyrex.
- Aerosol cans – including items like air freshener, spray deodorant, shaving cream, keyboard dusters, and others.
- Light bulbs - CFL and LED light bulbs only. For other types of lighting, email chemwaste@emory.edu.
- Batteries – all batteries of any type
- Non-food Styrofoam – clean foam from packaging, foam coolers, and other Styrofoam that is not a to-go food container can be recycled here. This includes clean Styrofoam boxes and coolers that are shipped to labs.

30. What should we do with electronic waste?

Emory distinguishes between two types of electronic waste:

- IT-related electronic waste that contain data, such as PCs, laptops and peripherals
- Electronic waste that does not contain data, such as microwave ovens, refrigerators and lab/clinic equipment.

All Emory University owned electronic waste must be returned to Emory for proper handling and processing. Electronic waste may contain Emory proprietary or patient data, and may contain materials that are regulated under environmental, health and safety laws; and therefore, may not be disposed of outside of Emory's process. In addition, Emory rigorously seeks to reuse or recycle all electronic waste.

All Emory electronics must follow these protocols for disposal. For the full list of acceptable items and details on procedures for disposing Emory electronic waste, please visit the LITS website at <http://it.emory.edu/electronicwaste/>.

31. Are Emory research and teaching labs a part of the waste policy?

All University buildings with laboratories have standard collection stations in laboratory hallways, common rooms, and break areas, with the addition of at least one glass recycling bin on each floor. Labs should self-service recyclable materials from inside labs into convenient collection stations outside the lab in the hall. Recycling inside of laboratories will be rolled out in 2019.

Custodians service landfill bins inside of laboratories; however, we encourage laboratories to reduce the number of landfill bins and use them only for materials that cannot be recycled or composted, such as ice packs, Pyrex glass, and nonhazardous gloves.

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

32. Are Emory spaces at Executive Park a part of the Waste Policy?

At this time, Executive Park does not participate in the Waste Policy.

33. Are Emory Healthcare spaces a part of the Waste Policy?

This Waste Policy applies to Emory University spaces only. The [Emory Sustainability Vision](#) sets a goal of 37% landfill diversion by 2025 for Emory Healthcare spaces. Emory Healthcare is implementing various landfill diversion programs in its facilities, and may adopt this or a similar policy in the future.

34. 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 and serving materials that are compostable or recyclable at Emory.

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

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

36. 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 recycling@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.

37. How is outreach and education about the Zero Landfill Waste Policy and goals 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 hold outreach and education programs throughout the University.

Emory's Sustainability Representatives lead 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](#) to seek ways to be involved in sustainability at your department or building level.

38. How do 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](#).

39. What happens to the recycled materials, especially plastics that are non #1-6 such as snack wrappers, plastic film, and tape?

One of Emory's recycling vendors, Pratt Industries, is a waste-to-energy facility. Any items that aren't recyclable, like chip bags and plastic film, are sorted out and burned for energy to run the recycling facility. This is not as good as recycling, but better than throwing in a landfill. Much of the success of our program hinges on Pratt's success and the integrity of the waste stream that we send to them. That is why it is extremely important that our community sorts properly and that we continue to send Pratt high value commodities that are separated at the source as much as possible.

40. Are [Dixie PerfectTouch coffee cups](#) (pictured below) recyclable or compostable?

No, these cups are not recyclable or compostable because they are lined with foam. In alignment with Emory's ban on Styrofoam, these cups are not available in Emory Express and should not be used on Emory's campus.



41. 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.

42. How should we recycle...? ([watch this video for more information!](#))

a) 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.

b) Items that have mixed materials, such as writing pens, bubble-lined envelopes, binder clips, dry erase markers, 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 materials before they are recycled. Therefore, a few misplaced items will not ruin the load.

c) Waste from single-use coffee machines?

Single-use coffee machines (like Keurig and Flavia) create problematic waste and increase energy use, so their purchase with Emory funds is discouraged.

- If Flavia single-use coffee machines are present, please do not place waste into Emory's recycling stream; rather, [utilize the recycling program that the manufacturer offers](#).
- Keurig pods can be deconstructed by following the [instructions outlined on their website](#). The foil lid goes into the PLASTICS & METALS bin, the coffee grounds go into the COMPOST bin, and the plastic cup should be rinsed and placed into the PLASTICS & METALS bin. These do not need to go into the Landfill bin.
- Roar brand coffee machines produce a fully compostable pod.

d) Baby diapers and wipes?

Place dirty baby diapers and wipes into the LANDFILL bin.

e) Polyester labels?

Anything polyester, including the labels, should go in the PLASTICS & METALS bin.

f) Paper with a slick coating, like book jackets, publications, and brochures?

Any paper that is not white paper should be placed into the MIXED PAPER recycle bin, even if it has a slick coating on it.

g) Paper board that is waxed, such as frozen lunch boxes and paper milk cartons?

Waxed paper board cartons and boxes can be placed into either MIXED PAPER or COMPOST. If heavily soiled with food, place in Compost.

h) Glass beer and wine bottles?

All glass can be placed in the Glass recycle containers located in the ["Hard to Recycle" materials stations](#) across campus. Glass is difficult to recycle, so we encourage the use of aluminum cans and other alternatives when possible.

i) Styrofoam?

Styrofoam is a material that does not biodegrade and lasts for hundreds of years in landfills; therefore, its use and purchase with Emory funds is discouraged. However, collection of clean Styrofoam packaging and coolers from laboratories is available in the [“Hard to Recycle” materials stations](#) across campus. Styrofoam to-go food containers that are soiled with food residue are not recyclable, and must be placed into the landfill bin; therefore, please do not bring Styrofoam food containers to Emory’s campus.

j) Used band aids and dental floss?

Place used band aids and dental floss in to the PLASTICS & METALS bin. They will be sorted out and burned for energy to run the recycling facility.

k) Stickers, sticker backings, tape, and sticky sheets from lint rollers?

Place all stickers and their backings, tape, and lint roller sheets into the Plastics & Metals bin.

l) Used hand wipes?

Place used hand wipes into the COMPOST bin.

m) Cat litter and dog waste?

Place all cat litter and dog waste into the LANDFILL bin.

n) Clothes dryer lint or other lint?

Place all lint into the COMPOST bin.

o) Rubber bands?

Place all rubber bands into the Plastics & Metals bins. They will be sorted out and burned for energy to run the recycling facility.

p) Felt?

Place all felt in the PLASTICS & METALS bin. While felt could be made of cotton and composted, some felt is made from synthetic materials, so to be safe it should not be placed in the compost bin.

q) Foil or plastic from the lids of sealed bottles?

Foil or plastic, such as from the lids of medicine bottles, should be placed into the PLASTICS & METALS bin.

r) Mixed material containers? Such as the ones mixed nuts come in that are cardboard in the middle with metal on the top and bottom?

Plastics and metals should be the default for mixed material containers.

s) Food-related waste?

Snack bags and granola bar or candy wrappers can all go into plastic recycling.

t) Personal hygiene products?

Please place personal hygiene products such as sharps and menstrual products in their respective designated bathroom landfill bins.

u) Hair brushes, combs, and/or tooth brushes?

Hair brushes, combs, and tooth brushes can be recycled in the mixed recycling bins outside or in the plastics and metals bins located in buildings around campus.

v) Gum?

Gum can be placed into compost bins.

w) Plastic straws?

Plastic straws can be placed in the mixed recycling bins outside or in the plastics and metals bins inside. Please consider reducing and eliminating your use of plastic straws.

x) Shoes and clothes?

Staff can donate or recycle their shoes and clothes off-campus. Students can donate and/or recycle shoes and clothes as designated during Move Out.

y) Ice gel and packs?

While it is ideal to reduce their use on campus, if you do have an ice or gel pack on campus contact chemwaste@emroy.edu for disposal.

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