

Emory University 2018 Waste Police Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

February 6, 2018

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

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 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 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. 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 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. 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 recycling, compost, and landfill, located within the conference space. If spaces does not allow for the five standard bins, a dual-stream set-up with compost and recycling may be installed, or a five standard bin set will be located conveniently outside the room. Small conference rooms with fewer than 25 seats will have signage directing occupants to convenient collection areas where five standard bins are located. Conference room occupants are responsible for sorting their own waste into compost and recycling bins.

16. 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.

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

Some small rooms cannot accommodate all five bins, and in this case either no bins will be present, or a dual-stream set-up will be installed. Campus Services will determine the set-up during space walk-throughs with building occupants. These dual-stream set-ups will include a compost bin and a recycling bin where all recyclables will be placed together. Dual stream set-ups will not include a landfill bin. Custodial staff will be responsible for servicing 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 set-up of white paper and mixed paper will be installed. Dual-streams set-ups will not include a landfill bin. Custodial staff will be responsible for servicing waste from small copy and mail rooms that contain dual-stream bins.

19. How should we sort waste in restrooms?

Restroom waste consists primarily of paper towels, therefore landfill bins will be removed from restrooms and green compost bins will be installed. All paper towels should go into the green compost bin. Feminine 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. If your bathroom needs any of these bins, please contact Campus Services Customer Service at 404.727.7463 or cscsc@emory.edu. Custodial staff will be responsible for servicing waste from restrooms.

20. What type of bins will be placed in classrooms, and who is responsible for servicing classroom bins?

Campus Services worked with building occupants during walk-throughs to determine which classrooms need bins. Classrooms may contain five standard bins, or they may contain dual-stream bins for recycling 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 equipment, whether in the classroom or in a convenient location outside the classroom. Custodians will service these bins.

21. 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.

22. 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.

23. 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 CO₂e 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.

24. 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. For a detailed list of the types of items that can be composted, [refer to the Emory Recycles website](#).

25. 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.

26. 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.

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

Each Hard to Recycle materials stations 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.

28. What should we do with electronic waste?

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.

What is Electronic Waste? Electronic waste is defined by the EPA as “electrical and electronic equipment that is dependent on electric currents or electromagnetic fields in order to function (including all components, subassemblies, and consumables from the original equipment at the time of discarding).”

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

29. 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.

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

All University buildings with laboratories 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. Labs that participate in the [Green Labs at Emory certification program](#) will receive a complimentary set of recycling bins for inside the lab.

Custodians will continue to 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 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.

31. Are Emory spaces at Executive Park a part of the waste policy?

At this time, Executive Park will not participate in the waste policy. Emory is working with the property management firm to determine a plan and timeline for including Executive Park in the waste policy in the future.

32. 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.

33. 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.

34. 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.

35. 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. 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.

36. How is outreach and education about the zero landfill waste policy and goals being 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.

37. 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](#).

38. 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.

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 before 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, and 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, like frozen lunch boxes and paper milk cartons?

Waxed paper board cartons and boxes can be placed in 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 (map coming soon). 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 (map coming soon). 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.

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