

Frequently Asked Questions Cascade County Solid Waste District Operation

What is the Cascade County Solid Waste District?

Established in the early 1970s, the Solid Waste District was created to provide Cascade County residents the service of disposing their household refuse at a waste container site rather than in individual private dumps. Only Cascade County residents outside the city limits of Great Falls and Belt are automatically members of the district although others can voluntarily join the district by the purchase of a Solid Waste Permit. Only district members are eligible to dispose of their refuse at one of the eight Cascade County container sites. The district was never designed to be a home pick up system; it operates as a system of drop off stations designed for household refuse.

Why did Cascade County decide to radically change the system?

After several public hearings, Cascade County decided to privatize the district operations to a private firm, Montana Waste Systems, Inc., now Republic Services. The cost of providing the service has increased for several reasons:

- ◆ Illicit disposal of hazardous materials, which made the County liable for environmental exposure and clean-up, created the need to hire employees to ensure proper waste disposal.
- ◆ People are using the container sites without paying district assessment, which is illegal and shifts costs to lawful members.
- ◆ The assessment had not been adjusted for thirteen years, despite increases in costs over the years.
- ◆ Much of the equipment utilized by the department was in need of major repair or replacement, but inadequate funds had been set aside for this purpose.

What is the County doing to control costs?

◆ **Privatization:**

The decision to privatize the system was based on cost. Montana Waste Systems, Inc., now Republic Services, bid to provide the same service that the county estimated would cost 130% more to do in-house. The County Commission had decided to contract with a private company because the fee increase was 57.9% instead of 130% for the in-house solution.

◆ **Recycling:**

At this time, the county will not be providing recycling bins. The cost of recycling is very unstable and unless we raised the fees for the solid waste tickets, significantly, we cannot afford to continue to offer this service, but will revisit it in the future.

◆ **Attended container sites:**

Having the container sites attended will insure that only citizens who are paying for the service are utilizing the sites. Additionally hazardous and construction materials, which create additional cost for the district, can be controlled. Individuals wishing to dispose of extraordinary refuse will be charged an appropriate fee to cover the cost of disposal.

Why didn't I get a permit?

Solid Waste permits are mailed to the property owners the first week of December. If you did not receive your permits a quick call to 454- 6764 can determine the specific reason you have not received the permit. The permits are mailed to the property owner. If you are a renter, your landlord will receive the permit.

We mail two separate sheets at the same time. Each sheet has 26 punches available. The sheets are color coded by the year.

Why do I need a punch card?

You need your solid waste punch card to identify yourself at the various disposal sites. We strongly recommend you carry the punch card you received or you will be charged to dispose of your refuse. Having your card will insure you do not encounter difficulties at the container site, especially since the High Plains Landfill North of Great Falls, and the City of Cascade Container Site are already staffed and checking permits.

Does the number of landfill sites or the hours of operation change?

All current landfill sites will continue to operate but the hours of operation have changed. Please check our web-site for days and hours of operation and note the holiday closures.

Who gets assessed?

The assessment is placed on homes, commercial buildings and mobile homes only. If you only own land, you are not assessed and will not receive a punch card. If you own a house, you will be assessed and receive a punch card. If you rent a mobile home and you are the owner of the land, you will not get assessed, only the owner of the mobile home will be assessed and receive a punch card.

How many punches do I get on my card?

The amount of the assessment depends on the use of the structure and the number of punches you can use varies with the amount you are assessed. A single family home receives 26 punches every six months whereas a restaurant operation will be assessed more than a home and will receive more punches. A seasonal use cabin on the other hand will have fewer punches on its card than a house or a restaurant, but its assessment will also be lower. Each punch will be approximately three garbage cans of refuse and a staff member at the container site will assist you in measuring the size of your garbage.

Can I transfer my card?

Basically, the card is transferable at all times. You can use each card until it is completely punched or it expires. It is not property specific. If you need more dumping permits, you can simply buy a new punch card, or pay an amount of \$10 per pick-up load each time at the container site gate.

What happens if I lose my card?

If you lose your punch card, you will have to purchase a replacement punch card. That is why it is very important to treat your card as if it were cash. There is a \$10 replacement charge for lost permits.

How come my card is not being punched?

There would be no situation where a card would not be punched. Failure by the site attendant to punch the cards leaves an undue burden on other permit holders as this is a fee based arrangement.

Are the cards going to expire when stated or will they be like our coupons were and never expire?

The permits will expire on December 31st of every year and they will no longer be accepted. The cards are color coded for this reason.

How much is the punch card worth?

The punch card is worth one half of your yearly solid waste assessment.

What happens if I run out of punches while I am at the landfill or container site?

Just as before the difference will need to be paid on-site when you dump your refuse.

How come my coupons are no longer good?

The district is moving to a fully accountable system in regards to the amount of refuse dumped per year. This is necessary to control costs and what is being dumped in our sites.