

Going Green in Londonderry

Limited Waste: the New Trash Collection

It's hard to get excited over trash, but Londonderry in 2011 took a major step forward in managing its garbage. Not only are we "going green"; we're saving money in the process.

What changed? We converted to Limited Waste collection. Each household gets a standard new trash container, and trucks with just a driver and mechanical arm come around and empty it.

What size container? Residents may choose either 32-gallon (typical trash can size) or 65-gallon. For the overwhelming majority, this will be plenty big.

What happens if it's stolen or damaged? It will be replaced or repaired free of charge.

Isn't 1 container restrictive? Yes, that's why it's called Limited Waste—it incentivizes people to consider the amount of waste they generate, and to find cheaper and more environmentally sustainable ways to manage it.

Why does Limited Waste matter? Solid waste is the 4th largest budget item in the Town taxes we pay, and rising yearly. That's because when you throw something away, there is no "away." You have to pay to collect it, pay to transport it somewhere, and pay to leave it there. Limited Waste will help us keep taxes down.

Where does our trash go? To a landfill or incinerator. We pay about \$1.5 million annually to take it there. Think of trash collection as a municipal service that adds no value to the community; it simply avoids health problems. So, the less waste we create and have to dispose of, the less health risk we bear and the fewer taxes we pay.

Why should I care where the trash goes? Because: a) the Town is legally and financially responsible for it going to an approved disposal site (remember the Auburn Road Landfill / Superfund site?); and, b) NH is running out of sites. Within 15 years all remaining commercial landfills will reach capacity and close down.

Can't we ship it somewhere else then? Sure, but further away, to fewer locations, and at higher prices. 20 years ago we were paying \$40 per ton in disposal fees. This year we pay \$82. Shrinking and remote disposal options will greatly escalate the price—and our taxes.

Why are we doing this? The Town is seeking every opportunity to reduce the budget and alleviate taxes. It is a more efficient trash collection process that will be easier for residents and reduce fly away litter curbside.

How will Limited Waste help? By enabling us to cut the amount of trash we generate by thousands of tons each year. So we pay less in taxes than we otherwise would. More importantly, we see those savings every year. And the more towns that choose Limited Waste or Pay By The Bag for their trash collection, the longer we will preserve our landfills, avoid building more incinerators, and continue those savings.

How can you be sure? Look at Hudson, right next door. They went Limited Waste and cut their trash volume by 4,500 tons, or 40% while doubling their recycling rate. Goffstown recycles 33% of their waste stream with Limited Waste – twice Londonderry's recycling rate.

Won't this increase illegal dumping? Every town we spoke to said "no". After a couple months of transition, each town reported smooth operation, less trash, and less cost.

For more information on Limited Waste collection, go to the Town website: londonderrynh.org, or call Bob Kerry, our environmental engineer at the DPW: **432-1100 x137**.

~Courtesy of the Solid Waste and Environment Committee~