



Mid Michigan Waste Authority

Community Resource Recovery Center

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Press Release

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For Immediate Release

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MMWA launches curbside education pilot

Eight communities to take part in new recycling education initiative

SAGINAW, MI ----- Mid Michigan Waste Authority is launching a new curbside education pilot in eight of its member communities that aims to improve recycling habits while recognizing residents who are already demonstrating good recycling behavior.

The 15-week pilot runs from April 16 to July 27, and will cover parts of Bridgeport Township, Carrollton Township, James Township, Saginaw Township, Spaulding Township, Village of St. Charles, Thomas Township, and Tittabawassee Township.

The project is funded in part by a Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Recycling Education Grant. Last May, MMWA was one of 13 entities statewide to receive an education grant, which supports Governor Snyder's 2014 *Residential Recycling Plan of Action* by increasing access to recycling, improving recycling processing capacity, and promoting recycling education in Michigan.

Through the pilot, MMWA is changing the tone of its curbside education efforts by using two new stickers to help educate residents and promote the MMWA recycling program.

The "Gold Medal" sticker will provide positive reinforcement to those residents who "get caught being good recyclers." Recycling collection workers will leave the sticker on bins and cans that are prepared properly and contain only accepted recyclables.

The "Oops!" sticker will be left on recycling bins or cans that contain the three most common recycling container contaminants: plastic bags, foam products, or greasy pizza boxes. Because these items are not recyclable in the MMWA curbside program, the sticker will remind residents that they should be placed in the trash.

"These stickers provide a rare and valuable opportunity to provide direct feedback to our residents," said MMWA Administrative Director Katharine Tessin. "We want to educate residents who are mistakenly putting the wrong items in their recycling containers, but we also want to let good recyclers know that we recognize and appreciate their efforts."

Each sticker will also feature information encouraging residents to use a recycling can instead of a bin. Residents may use any 45-gallon or smaller can with handles, as long as they are labeled with "Recyclables Only" stickers available through MMWA or local municipal offices.

Larger cans help keep recyclables contained and dry and reduce blowing litter. Because a 45-gallon can is more than twice the size of the currently used 18-gallon, the greater capacity also allows residents to recycle more items, without the space constraints of the smaller bins.

Residents who receive the stickers are asked to participate in a brief online survey to help measure the success of the pilot project. Each sticker will feature a link to the survey. Respondents may remain anonymous or they can provide their contact information to be entered into a drawing for a \$100 gift card to a locally-owned business.

The initiative also includes billboards in participating communities promoting the, "Have you outgrown your recycling bin?" message.

Increasing curbside recycling participation is a key objective for MMWA, but it is also critical that residents are recycling the correct items, explained Tessin.

"We know our recyclers have the best of the intentions when they place materials to the curb, but sometimes 'wishful recycling' means the wrong things end up in recycling containers," she said. "Recycling is good for the environment, but it is also a business, and we need to make sure we are providing our end-use manufacturers with clean, quality materials."

Residents in areas that are not part of the pilot project will see no change to their curbside recycling program. Drivers will continue to use the orange stickers that inform residents of improperly prepared trash, recycling, or yard waste, or note that a bulk item has been scheduled for collection.

For more information about the curbside education pilot, contact MMWA at (989) 781-9555 or mwwa@recycleemotion.org.

Mid Michigan Waste Authority is a government entity providing comprehensive residential solid waste services to approximately 69,000 households in 34 communities across the Saginaw Valley area. For more information about residential curbside collection services and other MMWA programming, visit www.recycleemotion.org.

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MMWA Curbside Education Pilot FAQs

April 16 - July 27

What is the purpose of this project?

Mid Michigan Waste Authority has received a Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Recycling Education Grant for a curbside education pilot. The goal of the project is to educate residents about what items should not be placed in their recycling containers, while encouraging them to switch from a recycling bin to a 45-gallon or smaller can.

How does this impact residents?

Recycling drivers in parts of your community will be using two new stickers to educate residents about the MMWA recycling program. One sticker (the "Gold Medal Sticker") will be used to congratulate a resident for demonstrating good recycling behavior - recycling the correct items and properly preparing their cans/bins. The other sticker (the "Oops Sticker") will be used when a recycling bin or can contains plastic bags, foam, or greasy pizza boxes. Residents may find these stickers on their recycling containers, depending on what the driver observes in their recycling bins/cans.

MMWA has provided your office with samples. They are similar to a large Post-it note, with adhesive on one side, so they can be easily removed from containers.

What if the driver finds other non-recyclables in a container in the pilot program area?

For the duration of this pilot, drivers will focus only on foam, plastic bags, and greasy pizza boxes. They will not be tagging if other non-recyclables are observed, except when there is a safety issue (loose needles or human/animal waste, for example) or when a resident puts yard waste/brush in a recycling container.

Does the resident need to do anything with the sticker?

No, the sticker is left strictly to educate the resident. However, the sticker does include a link to a brief online survey that asks the resident about his or her knowledge of the MMWA recycling program. This data will help measure the success of the pilot and will be included in the final report to the DEQ. While the resident can provide his or her contact information to be entered into a drawing for a \$100 gift card to a local business, respondents can also opt to remain anonymous. Contact information will be used only to inform the winner of the drawing.

Will the stickers be used in every part of my community?

No. In order to involve as many communities as possible, the pilot will only be conducted in portions of each participating community. The number of participating homes varies in each community.

Will residents who live in other areas continue to receive orange stickers if they put out non-recyclables?

Yes. There are no changes to how recycling is collected in other areas of your community. Those residents will continue to receive the orange stickers that are used if Waste Management drivers observe non-recyclables or encounter improperly prepared recycling containers or bins.

Will this pilot change anything else about how recyclables are collected?

No. The same recycling rules and guidelines apply, and there will be no changes in how drivers service your community.

Will all areas go back to the orange sticker after the pilot ends?

Yes. After July 27, the Oops Stickers and Gold Medal stickers will not be used.

What if a resident receives a sticker and has questions?

Please advise residents to contact Mid Michigan Waste Authority (989-781-9555) if they have questions about stickers they have received or about the pilot project in general. These FAQs have been provided to help educate participating community offices about the project, but it is best if MMWA answers resident questions directly, as with other curbside collection issues.

Will MMWA be sharing the results of the pilot?

Yes. MMWA's final report to the DEQ will be shared with all member communities.



QUESTIONS?

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