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Poor recycling habits could cost Illinois residents their blue bins

By Cole Lauterbach | Illinois News Network Aug 29, 2018



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Illinoisans are having trouble figuring out what goes in the recycling bin and, so far, it has cost residents of one city their curbside recycling program.

Waste Management estimates that 25 percent of America's recycling isn't recyclable. In some places, it means services will be canceled.

In Illinois, Kankakee's garbage provider announced that it is stopping curbside recycling service on Sept. 1 in the city. Officials with Republic Services **told the Daily Journal** that Kankakee residents had been putting far too much garbage in recycling bins.



“When we hear about some of the communities or the service providers letting communities know ‘we can’t do this,’ we also hear the flip side in that residents are upset,” Illinois Recycling Association president Kris Kaar said.

It’s common, officials said, to see residents putting things like batteries, Christmas lights, garden hoses and half-full plastic containers that should never be recycled into recycling bins.

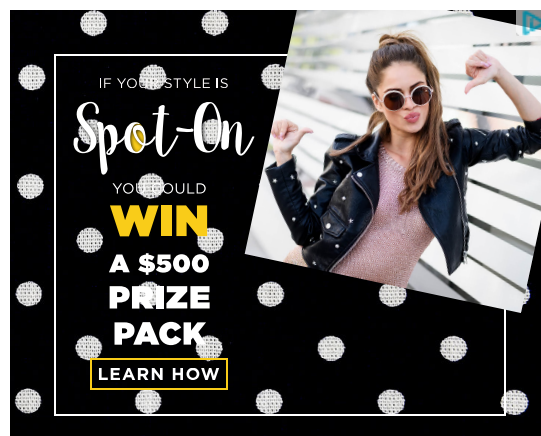
“Those kinds of materials are not accepted and should never have entered a materials recovery facility,” Kaar said. “We don’t know how anyone would think a soiled diaper could be recycled.”

Since January, China has significantly tightened restrictions on the level of contaminated recycling it will buy. That’s taken the profit out of recycling.

“China was the major end destination for most of the recyclables collected in the United States,” Kaar said.

This had led to major providers cracking down on what’s worthy of recycling and what’s not.

“We have talked to some communities about the quality of their curbside recycling,” said Lisa Disbrow, spokesperson for Waste Management of Illinois.



She said changing dynamics with those accepting the waste has created disparities in what is accepted and what the public views as recyclable.

Further south, a large recycling center at Scott Air Force Base in southern Illinois announced it would close because too many people with access to the base had been dumping construction waste and other non-recyclables materials there.

Communities in Indiana also have seen their curbside recycling bins taken away.

Information on what can and cannot be recycled can be found at Waste Management's recycleoftenrecycleright.com.

Cole Lauterbach

Reporter

Cole Lauterbach reports on Illinois government and statewide issues for INN. Lauterbach has managed and produced shows for news/talk radio stations in both Bloomington/Normal and Peoria, and created award-winning programs for Comcast SportsNet Chicago.



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