

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. 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 has 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. bid to provide the same service that the county estimated would cost 130% more to do in-house. The County Commission has decided to contract with a private company because the fee increase will be 57.9% instead of 130% for the in-house solution.

◆ Recycling:

The County will install recycling bins at the container sites as they become manned. They will be free of charge and help reduce the amount of waste taken to the landfill. People who separate their recyclable from their household waste will save on the number of punches on their card.

◆ 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?

All district members whose taxes were not delinquent were mailed a permit at the end of July. If you did not receive one, either none was printed due to delinquent taxes or the mailing address on file for you was incorrect. A quick call to 454-6810 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.

In the future, new permits will be issued when taxes are paid. After the taxes have been paid in November, the property owner will receive a new permit card valid for the following calendar year. After the May taxes are paid, the property owner will receive a second card that is valid for the rest of 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 with our letter of 27th of July, 2008 with you to dispose of your refuse. Having your card will insure you do not encounter difficulties at the container site, especially since the Great Falls Citizens Convenience Center, 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 may change later this year. We recognize it is likely that the hours of operations will need to change at some of the sites to better service our users. Until you are notified of changes in the schedules, the hours remain those posted at the entrance to each site.

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.

How come my card is not being punched?

During the implementation of the new system cards will not be punched. Cards will be punched starting January 1, 2009. However you will need to bring your permit with you to identify you as a member of the district.

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

The permits will expire with the date printed on them, and they will no longer be accepted.

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 onsite 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.