

# Information for the waste and recycling industry

**The NSW Government is working closely with the waste and recycling industry and councils to ensure critical waste services continue.**

This is a developing situation and the response taken by the NSW Government to COVID-19 may change over time.

The risk of transmission of COVID-19 when handling waste is low. Waste handling should continue using safe routine procedures.

## Critical waste services continue

Public health orders have been issued to protect the community and reduce the spread of COVID-19 infection. Although these orders restrict some business activities, the waste and recycling industry provides an important service for the community and certain critical businesses (such as supermarkets).

You can still go to work in the waste and recycling industry if you cannot work from home.

Authorised workers can continue to travel for the purposes of work. You may wish to carry identification or wear a uniform to assist with COVID-19 compliance checks.

A list of public health orders currently in force is at <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/information/covid19-legislation>. The list will be updated progressively.

## Disposal of household waste

Waste items from people in isolation with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 in non-healthcare facilities, such as homes and other

lodgings, should be placed in the red-lidded rubbish bin.

Advice for people in isolation is as follows:

- Dispose of all used personal care items such as tissues, disposable masks, gloves in a rubbish bin that's lined with a plastic bag.
- When the bin is three-quarters full, tie-off the plastic bag to prevent spillage of the contents. Avoid touching the inside of the bag and dispose of the bag into the general household red-lidded rubbish bin.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. You can use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser if your hands are not visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

Further information on the disposal of household waste can be found at [health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/advice-for-confirmed.aspx](https://health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/advice-for-confirmed.aspx).

## Disposal of clinical waste

Waste generated from clinical settings such as hospitals, nursing homes and mobile clinics, must be stored and processed as per usual. Such waste includes clinical waste, cytotoxic waste, pharmaceutical, drug or medicine waste, and sharps waste.

If waste managers and operators who transport, store, treat or dispose of clinical and related waste are unsure, they should refer to the following NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) advice:

- Schedule 1 of the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997*, for licensing requirements
- Part 11 of the *Protection of the Environment Operations (Waste) Regulation 2014*, for requirements relating to the storage, transport and disposal of clinical waste.

Further information on the disposal of clinical waste can be found at [epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/waste/industrial-waste/clinical-and-related-waste](https://epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/waste/industrial-waste/clinical-and-related-waste).

## Retail waste disposal

The NSW Government has allowed for waste disposal from retail premises at any time, under the Environmental Planning and Assessment (COVID-19 Development – Extended Operation) Order 2020.

The Government is working with councils to support communities across the state in response to COVID-19. This includes making this order to allow for development to be carried out without the normal planning approval in order to protect the health, safety and welfare of everyone.

The list of orders currently in force is at [planningportal.nsw.gov.au/Orders](http://planningportal.nsw.gov.au/Orders), and will be updated progressively. (Look under ‘Ministerial Orders 2020–21’.)

## Waste and recycling transport

The NSW Government is seeking to minimise the unnecessary movement of people.

If you live in or are staying in Greater Sydney including the Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Wollongong and Shellharbour, you must have a COVID-19 test in the 7 days before working if your workplace is 50 km or more outside Greater Sydney.

You must abide by the stay at home rules when not working.

To slow the spread of COVID-19, various state governments are also implementing restricted entry requirements. Waste transporters should check with the receiving state/territory on any requirements or restriction that may apply in that state/territory.

Regulations for tracking waste in and out of NSW or overseas still apply. Further information can be found at [epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment.waste/tracking-transporting-hazardous-waste/tracking-waste-out-nsw](http://epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment.waste/tracking-transporting-hazardous-waste/tracking-waste-out-nsw).

## Business continuity plans

Operators responsible for providing waste and recycling collection services and facilities need to activate and follow their COVID-safe work plans. Plans should include the priority responsibilities of storing, transporting and disposing of waste appropriately, as well as measures to continue essential waste services such as kerbside collection.

Plans should be assessed and revised to account for changing circumstances, such as reduced staff numbers or the loss of key personnel, with a focus on high-risk activities.

Licence holders and other entities regulated by the EPA should also have environmental risk management procedures in place to assist in minimising risks to the environment and human health and meet regulatory requirements. They must continue to immediately notify the EPA of pollution incidents and compliance issues. Please contact the EPA on 131 555 or [info@epa.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@epa.nsw.gov.au) early, if you have any licensing issues.

Operators should maintain good communications with clients and the EPA, particularly around any predicted service disruptions.

Where social distancing requires the extension of operating hours, waste operators should contact the EPA for further assistance. If you would like to discuss your circumstances, please call the Environment Line on 131 555.

## Key contacts

### Service NSW

For information and advice for NSW businesses go to [service.nsw.gov.au](http://service.nsw.gov.au).

### Health

Follow the COVID-19 health advice at NSW Health at [health.nsw.gov.au](http://health.nsw.gov.au).

### Worker health and safety

Follow SafeWork NSW advice at [safework.nsw.gov.au](http://safework.nsw.gov.au).

### Waste

For information about transport and disposal of waste visit [epa.nsw.gov.au](http://epa.nsw.gov.au) or call the Environment Line on 131 555.

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Email: [info@epa.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@epa.nsw.gov.au)

Website: [www.epa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au)

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