

Help Reduce the Curbside Contamination Rates

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) has increased its public education and outreach efforts to reduce contamination in curbside recycling. Although the RDN has long provided recycling education, the region's contamination rate exceeded acceptable thresholds for an extended period in 2025 and remains above allowable limits. Should contamination rates continue to exceed the maximum threshold, Recycle BC may fine the RDN. Fines could total \$120,000 per year, increasing operating costs and future utility fees for all RDN curbside customers.

Contamination in carts is often a result of wish-cycling (the practice of placing materials in the curbside recycling cart, hoping they will be recycled). Disregard for what materials can and cannot be placed in the recycling cart and general misuse of the recycling cart must end immediately to avoid fines. Achieving a low contamination rate is also operationally critical. Non-curbside recyclables, non-recyclable materials and hazardous materials can damage sorting equipment, affect the ability to recycle other materials - requiring those materials to be sent to the landfill, and cause potentially hazardous situations.

To reduce contamination rates, the RDN implemented a Contamination Reduction Plan (CRP) in March 2025. The plan includes enhanced curbside audits throughout 2026, cart tagging for non-compliant materials, regional and targeted household education and, if needed, enforcement for households that repeatedly fail to comply.

The RDN follows the below procedure and will begin noncompliance enforcement immediately:

- First offence: Cart tag identifying non-compliant materials found in the recycling cart
- Second offence: Cart tag and formal written notice outlining required corrective actions and potential consequences
- Third offence: Final written warning indicating that further non-compliance will result in enforcement measures
- Subsequent offences: Enforcement, including a penalty of \$500 per occurrence and potential suspension of curbside recycling services, if contamination continues.

This approach is intended to balance education with enforcement, support behaviour change and ensure compliance with program requirements and Recycle BC contractual obligations. While the efforts to date have resulted in improved compliance by many households, some households continue to place non-recyclable materials in recycling carts.

For information on recycling, including the 'What Goes Where' app, visit rdn.bc.ca/curbside-collection.

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For media inquiries, contact:

Rebecca Taylor, Communications Coordinator
Regional District of Nanaimo
250-713-2400
engagement@rdn.bc.ca

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