

RECORRA
CONTAMINATION
POLICY

Recorra Contamination Policy

Effective for all Recorra recycling and waste services, including sacks, wheeled bins, internal office bins, skips and compactors. For full technical specifications, see detail on forbidden items on page four and contamination allowances on page five.

What is “Contamination”?

“Contamination” is anything in a bin, sack, skip or compactor that should not be there for that service. There are two main types:

1 - Contamination (non-dangerous, but incorrect material)

- Examples: food in paper or glass recycling, general waste in mixed recycling, plastic in cardboard recycling, coffee cups in paper recycling.
- These items are not necessarily dangerous, but they spoil clean recyclables, increase processing costs, and can cause whole loads of recycling to be rejected as waste.

2 - Prohibited items (dangerous or always forbidden)

- Examples: batteries, electricals (WEEE/IT), gas canisters, chemicals, paints, solvents, oils, clinical waste, sharps, nappies, PPE, liquids, etc.
- These present a health & safety risk and/or must, by law, be handled separately.
- Prohibited items must never be placed in standard recycling or general waste containers unless you have a separate, agreed-upon collection.

In both cases, contamination reduces the chance that your materials are actually recycled and may lead to extra charges or refused collections.

Why is Contamination a Problem?

Contamination matters for three reasons:

1 - It stops recyclable materials from being recycled

- Food, liquids, and other incorrect materials spread through the load, contaminating otherwise clean paper, cardboard, cans, or plastics. As a result, these may have to be rejected and sent to our Energy-from-Waste partner instead of being recycled.
- Glass will shatter if compacted, leaving shards that are too small to sort and recycle.

2 - It creates health & safety risks

- Batteries, WEEE, and chemicals can cause fires or explosions in collection vehicles and at recycling facilities.
- Clinical and offensive waste (e.g., sharps, nappies, sanitary waste, etc.) expose staff to infection risks.
- Liquids and glass can damage machinery and increase the chance of injuries.

3 - It increases costs for everyone

- Contaminated loads are more expensive to process and may invoke fines from third-party facilities.
- Extra work is needed to sort, handle, and/or dispose of materials safely.
- Our contamination charging policy is designed to share these costs fairly and encourage good practice.

By keeping contamination low, you help protect your staff and ours, reduce environmental impact, and keep your service costs low.

What is Allowed in Each Service?

Each service is designed to collect specific materials. As a rule:

Mixed Recycling

- Intended for: clean, dry mixed recyclables (paper, card, cans, plastic containers) as specified in your service information
- Do not include glass, food, liquids, black sacks of general waste, plastic film, coffee cups, or prohibited items as listed on page four

Glass Recycling

- Intended for: glass bottles and jars only
- Do not include ceramics, Pyrex, crystal, window, or construction glass. Although they look similar, they are designed to withstand higher temperatures and are often coated with other chemicals, both of which damage processing equipment
- Do not include any other non-glass material, especially prohibited items as listed on page four

Food Recycling

- Intended for: food scraps and food waste (excluding coffee grounds if you have a separate coffee grounds service)
- Do not include packaging, liquids, glass, or prohibited items

Paper Recycling

- Intended for: clean, dry office paper, newspapers, magazines, leaflets, envelopes (nonpadded)
- Do not include food, drinks, plastic wrapping, coffee cups, tissues, or prohibited items as listed on page four

Cardboard Recycling

- Intended for: clean, dry cardboard boxes and cardboard packaging that has been broken down and flattened for collection
- Do not include food-soiled cardboard (e.g., greasy pizza boxes), plastic liners, polystyrene, or prohibited items as listed on page four

Coffee Cup Recycling (where provided)

- Intended for: used paper coffee cups and lids, as per your service guidelines
- Do not include general liquids, food, other packaging, or any prohibited items as listed on page four

Coffee Grounds Recycling (where provided)

- Intended for: spent coffee grounds only
- Do not include tea bags, food scraps, or other waste unless otherwise agreed

General Waste

- Intended for: nonrecyclable waste that cannot go into any of the above streams
- Must not contain prohibited items as listed on page four

If you are unsure which service an item belongs in, please consult our [Helpdesk](#) or your site's signage.

Items That are Always Forbidden

The following items are always forbidden in standard recycling and general waste containers, unless you have a pre-booked, agreed-upon collection:

WEEE / Electricals / IT Equipment

- Examples: Computers, laptops, monitors, servers, printers, kettles, fridges, freezers, and other appliances
- Why: WEEE regulations require separate, specialist recycling. Items often contain toxic and corrosive elements that can harm staff and/or damage equipment.

Batteries

- Examples: AA / AAA batteries, button cells, laptop batteries, power-tool batteries, lead-acid, and lithium-ion batteries
- Why: Can overheat, leak, or explode when compacted, causing fires or injuries. Must be collected separately.

Hazardous Materials

- Examples: Paints and solvents, chemical building products, fluorescent tubes, mineral oils, compressed gases, and gas canisters
- Why: Contain dangerous substances and/or are pressurised. Must be handled via licensed hazardous-waste services.

Liquids

- Examples: Containers still holding liquid or bulk liquids poured into bins
- Why: Damages recyclables, leaks from bins and vehicles, and increases risk for staff

Clinical Waste

- Examples: Sharps, needles, blades, pharmaceuticals, medical dressings, or infected tissues
- Why: Presents infection and injury risks and must be handled via a licensed clinical waste service

Offensive Waste

- Examples: Nappies, sanitary products, or incontinence pads
- Why: Presents health and hygiene risks and requires separate handling

PPE (where not in a dedicated PPE service)

- Examples: Used face masks, gloves, or visors
- Why: May be contaminated and pose health risks. Must not be placed in normal recycling.

Tyres and Plasterboard

- Why: Require separate specialist treatment and are not accepted in standard recycling or general waste

Glass in the wrong stream

- Examples: Glass in non-glass recycling or window/construction glass, Pyrex, or crystal in any non-specialised waste stream
- Why: Breaks and spreads through the load, is dangerous for staff and damages sorting machinery

If you need to dispose of any of these items, please [contact Recorra](#) so we can arrange the correct specialist service and/or collection.

Contamination Allowances

Each Recorra recycling stream has a maximum contamination allowance by weight. This is a small tolerance to allow for occasional mistakes.

Examples:

- Glass: Up to around 2% contamination from other materials
- Most other recycling services (Paper, Cardboard, Coffee Cups, Coffee Grounds, Mixed Recycling, Compostables, PPE): Up to around 5% contamination
- Batteries and films: Up to around 2% contamination
- General Waste: No set percentage, but forbidden items are never allowed

If a bin, sack or load exceeds these allowances, it is considered contaminated. Depending on what is found and the level of contamination, we may:

- Collect it as recycling but note the contamination and, if your average contamination rate is high, apply a contamination charge
- Collect it as general waste instead (usually at a higher cost)
- Refuse to collect the container if prohibited or dangerous items are present, and ask you to remove them
- In rare cases, arrange specialist hazardous or clinical waste handling

Our email notifications will explain what was found and what we have done in each case.

How Do We Assess Contamination and Charges?

Our contamination process is designed to:

- Keep staff and sites safe
- Protect material quality so that recycling is actually recycled
- Be fair to customers by allowing for occasional mistakes but discouraging repeat issues

Key points:

1 - Drivers record what they see

- If a bin has minor contamination, the Operative will usually empty it and log it as contaminated (with a photo).
- If a bin contains severe or prohibited items, the Operative may refuse to empty it for safety reasons. A photo is taken and the bin is tagged.

2 - Shift Managers review evidence

- Photos and notes are checked to confirm contamination and to make sure they are clear enough to share with you.
- Contamination types are categorised (e.g., food, glass, batteries, WEEE).

3 - We apply a fair-use approach

- Occasional, low-level mistakes are expected; these may not always result in a charge.
- Where contamination is frequent, heavy, or includes prohibited items, charges and/or refused collections will apply in line with your service agreement and our internal thresholds.

4 - You will be informed

- You will receive an email describing:
 - What was found.
 - Whether a charge applies or the bin was refused.
 - What happens next, and how to avoid repeat issues.
- For multi-site customers, we may send weekly summaries instead of multiple individual emails.

If you would like more detail on how contamination charging is calculated for Recorra's Dry Mixed Recycling, please speak to your Account Manager or contact our [Helpdesk](#).

Refused Bins and Prohibited Items

In some situations, we cannot safely empty a bin. For example:

- Prohibited or hazardous items are present (e.g., gas canisters, loose batteries, chemicals, sharps)
- Contamination is so severe that it would risk damaging equipment or heavily contaminate other recyclables

In these cases:

The bin may be left uncollected and tagged, and you will be asked to remove the offending items.

Alternatively, we may arrange:

- A separate waste collection (e.g., bin tipped as general waste).
- A callout for our staff to remove the items or sort the bin contents.
- A hazardous or clinical waste service where legally required.

These options usually incur additional charges, which will be explained in your communications with Recorra.

How You Can Avoid Contamination

We want to help you recycle more and avoid extra costs. You can reduce contamination by:

- Ensuring the correct bins and signage are available for each material stream
- Training staff and partners on what goes where
- Keeping food, liquids, and black sacks out of recycling
- Using dedicated services for coffee cups, coffee grounds, WEEE, batteries, hazardous, clinical and offensive waste where needed
- Reviewing contamination photos and feedback we send and taking corrective action

We also provide support materials, including:

- Posters and bin stickers
- Training guides
- Interactive tools and resources via [MyRecorra](#)

You can access these through the [MyRecorra](#) portal.

Need Help or Specialist Collections?

If you are unsure about an item or need to arrange collections for any of the prohibited materials listed above, please contact your Account Manager or the [Recorra Helpdesk](#).

We are happy to review your current setup, recommend the right containers and services, and help you keep contamination to a minimum.



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