

## **New law bans plastic bottles from trash today**

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Anyone finishing a plastic bottle of soda, milk or cough syrup today has to find a different place than the trash can to toss it.

While no one is monitoring the garbage for enforcement, plastic bottles are not allowed in landfills in North Carolina when a law takes effect today.

For most Craven County residents, however, the new requirement shouldn't cost them anything more than the change of a habit, said Rusty Cotton, the Craven County solid waste and recycling director.

"Craven County has in place a curbside collection program and is already recycling all those items the state is adding to the ban," Cotton said. "We also accept all of those items at our convenience centers and, for us, have only a little more separation, not much."

The new law adds to its landfill bans all wooden pallets, oil filters, and plastic bottles holding liquid and that have a neck smaller than the bottom. The bottle top is made of a different plastic and needs to go in the trash.

The recycling fee for Craven County households is \$36 per year, which taxpayers pay whether or not they use the once-a-week service provided at curbside under a \$1.4 million per year contract with GDS of New Bern that goes through June 30, 2011.

"We do not anticipate the recycling fee going up at this time," Cotton said. "Every year at budget time we review it, based on the consumer price index fluctuation. There is a possibility in the next few years that it could go up but we do not anticipate an increase in recycling fees."

Cotton and Bobbi Waters, the education coordinator at the Coastal Area Solid Waste Management Authority that handles waste for Craven, Pamlico and Carteret counties and some of Jones County, said there will be no inspections of garbage or anything along those lines in connection with the new ban.

"They could stop some of the haulers if they are obviously carrying a large amount of those banned items," Cotton said, but residents can actually save money by recycling rather than trashing plastic bottles because stamps for county garbage collections are priced by weight.

Waters said she is aware of different levels of compliance required by agencies collecting trash.

"In Beaufort, they are actually not going to pick up trash if they see plastic bottles in the trash. They'll leave it there," she said. "River Bend has set up an oil recycling site and will add oil filter recycling there for their residents."

Cotton said a similar oil filter recycling bin will be at Craven County convenience centers.

Charles Johnson, GDS director, said, “since the ban was announced, more and more people are requesting bins that never recycled before.”

GDS collects recycled material set out in 18-gallon bins from about 42,000 residential customers once a week on seven routes that run Monday through Friday, he said. “Last month we collected 575 tons of recycling, up nearly 100 tons over last year. This month it is over 600 tons and last year it was 520 tons, so people are recycling more.”

Waters said, “the education effort has been great. I think people are definitely more aware and, hopefully, there will be more recycling now. The spirit of this law is to encourage recycling. It won’t happen overnight, but it’s a great start.”

“Folks who want to make the effort will have additional recycling containers at events, like sponsors of Havelock’s Chili Festival in mid-October who called to consult on doing that,” she said.

Johnson said, “The value of these new bans is to save our landfill’s life. It will increase if it isn’t filled with plastic and palates and other things that are recyclable. We’re pushing being green. This is one way everybody can pitch in and be green.”

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