

Recycling - It's *Not* a Burning Issue

*Following an instance last week of hot ashes being dumped in a recycling bin and subsequently catching fire, the Waimakariri District Council is asking ratepayers **NOT** to put ashes of any kind in recycling bins.*

Waste Asset Manager Kitty Waghorn says that ashes, hot or cold, don't belong in the recycling bins. "Ashes belong with your general rubbish going into the rubbish bin or bag", she says, "and even then, you need to ensure that there are no live embers in those ashes – that could involve either dampening them down thoroughly or waiting two to three days before disposing of them".

The Council's transfer station operators noticed smoke coming from a compactor bin which was almost full of kerbside recycling collected that day and that was to be sent to the EcoCentral sorting plant in Christchurch. The container was emptied onto the refuse pit floor and, once air got to the source of the smoke, flames erupted and the contractors had to douse the flames and damp the contents down. The fire and water damaged recycling had to be dumped: luckily this amounted to only a portion of the 10 tonne load in the compactor bin consisting of recyclable material from half the day's collection round.

The emergency procedure for the kerbside collection drivers who notice smoke coming out of a compactor compartment on their vehicle is to stop on the road and empty the truck, and then call the fire department.

"The practice of disposing of ashes in recycling bins or rubbish bins could cause a fire at any time", says Mrs Waghorn. "In the collection truck, in the transfer station, in the container going to the city. There is the potential for serious disruption and damage and also possible injury to the driver concerned".

And ashes are not the only contaminant found recently in recycling bins. There have been cases of dead pets, sawdust, bags of rubbish, gumboots, as well as ongoing instances of plastic plant pots, bubble wrap, Gladwrap, clothing and bread bags in the recycling. Mrs Waghorn reminds residents that contaminated recyclables end up in landfill, and that the recycling is initially sorted for gross contamination by people at EcoCentral. "Please give a thought to those whose job it is to remove the larger contaminants from the materials on the sorting line and don't throw anything but clean recycling into the yellow-topped bin!"

For those who are in doubt as to what is and isn't allowed in the recycling bins, the Council's website has a comprehensive listing of allowable materials. Mrs Waghorn says that, where recycling bins are found to have contaminants in them, they will be stickered and not collected. In the worst cases, when contamination keeps occurring, the bins may be removed from the property.

For more information contact:

Kitty Waghorn
Solid Waste Asset Manager

Phone: 03 311 8900 or 03 327 6834
Email: kitty.waghorn@wmk.govt.nz

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