

Q & A'S

Questions and Answers on Glass Recycling Issues

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Welcome to our Q&A's document on glass recycling. The first part of this document outlines a number of general Q&As that have been provided by the Natural Resources Department for community members. The second section highlights questions asked by local residents and the respective City responses. We update these Q&A's on an ongoing basis based on queries from our community. Thanks for your interest!

PART I: General Q&A

Question 1: How does glass rate in terms of recycling compared to other materials like paper and aluminum?

Answer 1: Unlike most other recyclables, glass can be recycled over and over, almost into infinity, and still retain its tensile strength and aesthetic qualities. But the raw materials that are used to make glass (mostly sand, along with soda ash and limestone) are so abundant and cheap that when you take glass to be sold to bottle makers for making new glass, it doesn't have a very high market value.

Let's look at a comparison. If you take a load of aluminum cans to a scrap metal dealer, you might get paid as much as \$1,600/ton! And if you go to the Larimer County Recycling Center with a load of pure newspaper or pure cardboard, they'll pay you \$35 and \$28/ton, respectively.

To recycle glass, you'd first have to go to the trouble of getting it to a processor (the nearest is 60 miles from Fort Collins). There, you'd be paid \$20/ton for mixed colored glass, or \$55/ton for amber (brown) glass.

Question 2: Why the difference in price between brown glass and other mixed colors?

Answer 2: Brown glass, or amber glass as it's known in the industry, is especially useful for making new beer bottles. In Wheat Ridge, the nice folks at Rocky Mountain Bottle Company make new beer bottles for the Coors brewery in Golden.

Question 3: Aren't there other ways to use recycled glass than to make new bottles or jars?

Answer 3: It would be great if we had a glass-tile company, or a manufacturer who could use recycled glass to make fancy modern countertops, here in Colorado, but even then, they would probably only be able to use a small percentage of the glass we generate. Some areas of the country are using glass to make road-base or back-fill material for trenches and other engineering applications. However, as of now, that industry has not been very successful in getting established in our area.

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Question 4: Why don't we have an advanced deposit on beverage containers, including glass, here in Colorado - wouldn't that help us "capture" more of the glass to be recycled?

Answer 4: Eleven states already have "bottle bill" systems, where you pay a refundable nickel or dime per bottle at the point of purchase on beverage containers. A number of other states have also been studying this approach (the beverage companies are often big opponents to advance disposal/deposit requirements), because in those states that do have bottle bills, 85-90% of the containers get recycled. Non-bottle bill states, by comparison, struggle to recover 50% of their bottles and cans - at best!

Question 5: How much separated glass has the City of Fort Collins been collecting from the voluntary glass-only recycling bin at the Rivendell Recycling Center?

Answer 5: In 2007 we collected a total of 32 tons. So far, in 2008 we have collected 25 tons of clean glass as more people who want to be super-recyclers find out about this drop-off option.

Citizens will find the white-colored bin for separated glass inconspicuously placed on the right side of the drop-off site, as they enter the Rivendell Recycling Center (located at 1702 Riverside in Fort Collins. Hours of operation run from dawn to dusk, seven days/week).

PART II: Questions from community members

Question 6: "I will happily separate glass objects from plastics and deliver them the glass to the recycle center on Taft Hill. Or will I be given another recycle bin for glass? Should I call my trash hauler and ask for another bin?"

Answer 6:

Your local trash/recycling hauler will continue collecting glass in with the rest of the commingled stream of materials that are accepted in the curbside recycling program. Although you are certainly welcome to call your company about it, the City doesn't plan to ask the haulers to separately collect glass (which would

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require them to either bring another truck to your home or to set up a second compartment in the existing truck).

At least for now, citizens will need to go to one of the three drop-off sites that have been set up for collecting separated glass (1702 Riverside, Fort Collins; 5887 S. Taft Hill Road, Fort Collins; or, 400 Wilson Avenue, Loveland).

Question 7: “Will I next week receive notice that I am to separate the various numbered plastics? If so, please provide rather specific information to the local news media.

Answer 7:

Plastics #1- #7 are all still collected in a mixed stream; no need to separate them by type or by identification codes! We do not foresee that there will be any changes in the next 2-5 years for recycling plastics, and will do our best to provide good information to the media and to the public.

Question 8: “The glass recycling bin is too tall for short people to reach safely. Please add stairs/platform so that there is no risk of falling/dropping a load of glass.”

Answer 8:

Excellent suggestion! We are working on getting a welder to build a platform for the glass-only bin at Rivendell and hope to have it installed as soon as possible.

Question 9: “We are already recycling glass with curbside recycling. So I am confused as to why we are having a separate glass recycling initiative?”

Answer 9: You're welcome to continue to recycle your glass bottles and jars at curbside recycling. Recycling rates for curbside recycling of glass stand at about 30%. By taking your glass to one of the three glass-only drop off locations in Fort Collins and Loveland and placing it in the glass-only bin, you can be assured that nearly 100% of that glass is actually manufactured back into glass bottles.