

“Put-it-in-the-Cart”

Charlotte County’s New Automated Garbage Collection Cart Program

By Jim Thomson, Director, Environmental & Extension Services

Residents living in unincorporated Charlotte County have a tremendous Solid Waste program. The recently adopted automated once-a-week curbside services program for unincorporated Charlotte County has resulted in reduced wear and tear on County roads; reduced carbon dioxide emissions; and, of course, reduced sanitation rates paid by our County residents. In addition to the curbside services for household garbage, recycling, and yard trimming collections, County residents have access to two (2) *free* recycling facilities which accept a variety of household items. The County’s resources also include a County owned and operated landfill with sufficient disposal capacity to meet the needs of our citizens.

I would like to express my appreciation on behalf of the County to all the residents that are properly using this new ‘Put-it-in-the-Cart’ automated system. The key to making this program work at peak efficiencies is the ability of the sanitation workers to stay inside their vehicle while using the automated collection arm to pick up the cart, empty it, and place it back on the ground. The program has been in place for several months now. The biggest challenge faced is keeping the new green garbage cart by itself, away from excess garbage bags, mail boxes, telephone poles or other objects which interferes with the automated collection arm.

To continue the cost savings and ensure efficiencies derived from this automated service, it is critical that all residents follow the ‘Put-it-in-the-Cart’ program parameters; bag and place garbage in the automated garbage cart with the lid closed, making sure that no garbage is placed beside or on top of the cart. These automated carts are capable of holding 2 to 3 typically sized garbage cans worth of garbage; the program was designed to accommodate the volume of waste produced by Charlotte County households. To accommodate special household occasions, the program offers six (6) events each year where Waste Management will collect household garbage placed outside the automated cart. This household garbage needs to be placed in plastic bags or your typical garbage can.

Placing garbage outside the cart can be used by residents for graduations, parties, housekeeping, holidays, or anytime it is necessary up to 6 events per year. Waste Management will track residential activity, but residents should track their use of this additional service to avoid exceeding the limit, should the limit be exceeded, the waste set out side the cart will not be picked up.

Did you know that, according to an independent survey of solid waste charges in over thirty (30) statewide communities, **Charlotte County has the lowest rates?** These rates go from Charlotte County’s low of \$148.04 to Ocala’s \$260.40 and peaking at \$459.63 for Miami-Dade County. In order to keep our costs under

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control and to provide a level of service that meets the waste generated by our residents, it is necessary for our County's hauler, Waste Management, to begin enforcing the policy as originally stated. Only garbage that is in the new garbage cart will be picked up. The only exception to this will be the six (6) special occasion pick-ups, determined by the individual resident, when additional garbage is produced.

If a resident finds that their household waste regularly exceeds the automated cart's capacity, the Solid Waste Division has the following suggestions:

Suggestion #1 - increase your recycling as recycling more materials gives you more room in your garbage cart. (To order recycling bins, go to the County's website www.CharlotteCountyFL.com and order additional recycling bins);
Suggestion #2 – take bulky items to the County's mini transfer & recycling facilities in Englewood and in Murdock; Suggestion #3 – lease an additional garbage cart for \$2.50 per month by calling Waste Management at 941.629.1106.

A note to homeowners / landlords – The carts are the property of Charlotte County and should not be removed from the home where they were placed. When you or your tenants move, please make sure the garbage cart stays with the home.

Charlotte County's Solid Waste Division continually seeks to provide a high level of services for our residents. We would appreciate hearing from you, should you have any comments that would enable us to better serve the community's needs. Please call the Environmental & Extension Service at 941.743.4360.