



**COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on the MSW Management System  
A National Perspective  
January 28, 2021**

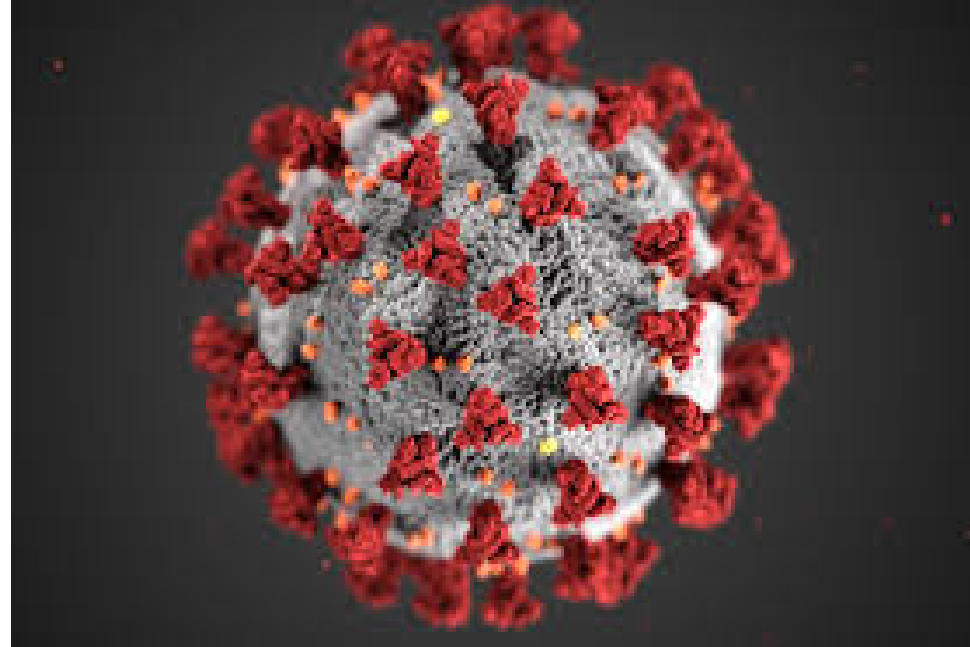
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## Who We Are

- Largest association for the waste & recycling sector in the U.S. & Canada
- Core programs focus on education, research, advocacy and safety
- Recognized solid waste expert by EPA and other federal agencies, Congress, the national media and trade publications

## 2020 Was a Challenging Year

- Recycling was our #1 issue
- Then came COVID-19 & economic downturn
- Forced SWANA to focus on providing resources and information to the industry



## Daily Operations

- Social distancing
- Employers provide PPE, masks, sanitizer, and wipes
- Daily truck cleaning
  - Same for forklifts, yellow iron, etc.
- No more in-person drivers' meetings
- Changes to lunch and break rooms
- Minimize worker interaction between shifts
- Minimize exposure in cabs
  - Helper minimizing time in the cab
  - Helpers driving to route
  - Dividers in the cab

## Impacts on Waste & Recycling

### **Residential increased 20-25%**

- Currently up 5 – 10% nationwide
- Suspension of curbside programs (recycling, bulky)
  - Majority now restored
- Hired contractors to assist
- Large companies seek re-pricing of contracts

### **Commercial decreased 20-25%**

- Decline was 50% or more in some major cities
- Currently down 8-10% nationwide
- Small haulers continuing to sell
- Companies seeking savings where possible

## Impacts on Recycling

# Significant fluctuations in recycling volumes and pricing

- Sources of clean commercial paper and other recyclables disappeared
- Americans were buying online at record levels, putting boxes at the curb
  - OCC price went from \$25/ton to \$100+/ton to \$55/ton
  - Mixed paper went from negative to positive value



## Garbage on the Street

# Increased residential waste, staffing shortages, and budget cuts caused collection delays

- Philadelphia
- Baltimore
- Atlanta
- Memphis
- New York City



Garbage on  
the Street  
+  
Closed Facilities  
=  
News Story





# PPE Litter



## Messages to the Public

- All trash in carts/containers or closed bags
  - No loose tissues, wipes, etc.
- All recyclables in a cart/container
- No loose cardboard on the curb
- PPE Litter
  - Put used gloves/masks in the trash, not recycling
- Delay Spring Cleaning



### HELP PROTECT WASTE & RECYCLING WORKERS NOW

Solid waste collection is a critical and essential job as part of the response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. You can help protect the health of the men and women who collect your trash and recycling during this vital time. The virus may survive for up to 24 hours on cardboard and two to three days on plastic\*. With a few simple steps, you can protect sanitation workers by reducing the possibility they will come into contact with potentially contaminated items.

#### GARBAGE

- Make sure all your trash is inside a closed plastic bag. If a bin or cart are provided, all materials must fit inside. No bags should be left next to the bins or carts.
- Wash your hands before putting your waste containers out for collection. Sanitize or wipe handles and lids to further reduce exposure.
- **Please do not "spring clean" at this time.** Collection workers are working harder and more carefully right now, sometimes with fewer people. Do not add to the waste by cleaning garages, attics, closets, basements, etc. All material should fit into a container, if provided.

#### RECYCLING

Recycling remains important during this time. The materials you put out for collection are turned into cardboard boxes, tissues, and paper towels that we need now more than ever.

- Tissues, paper towels, wipes, masks, latex gloves, or any other sanitary or cleaning materials used to protect you from the Coronavirus should NOT go into recycling carts or bins. (These items are never recyclable.) **RECYCLED MATERIALS ARE OFTEN HANDLED BY WORKERS WHEN SORTED LATER.**
- Break down large cardboard boxes and cut them apart, if needed, to fit inside your recycling container. Recyclables that do not fit inside a container should not be put out.
- Empty, rinse, and dry your bottles, cans, and other containers before you recycle them.
- Food and liquids never belong in recycling.

#### VISITING FACILITIES

If your community still allows members of the public to drop-off waste or recyclables at a facility, please follow all safety policies and procedures required by that facility. These might include not paying with cash, keeping at least 6 feet of distance between you, other customers, and any employees, and unloading in the correct area to avoid requiring staff to handle discarded materials more than necessary. And of course, always follow all safety rules regarding speed limits, cell phone usage, and remaining near/in your vehicle.

#### OTHER SERVICES

To keep workers safe, minimize their exposure, and handle all of the waste and recycling coming from homes, your waste services provider may make temporary changes, including suspending bulk waste pickup or yard waste collection, and closing drop off centers or other facilities to the general public. These are temporary changes meant to protect the lives of the hard working men and women in the waste and recycling industry.

For more information about how the Coronavirus is impacting waste employees and employers, visit [SWANA.org](https://www.swana.org).

\* World Health Organization, Q&A on coronaviruses (COVID-19) <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronavirus>

# Safety

**Fewer fatal incidents**

**Fewer recordable incidents**

- Reduction in traffic
- Reduction in overall waste
- Front line more safety conscious



# Budgets

- Public sector budgets challenged
  - 35 states reported total tax revenue declines
  - Not as bad as originally projected (but not good)
  - Effects on local government budgets may take more time to appear
  - Biden proposed \$350 billion in direct aid for state and local governments

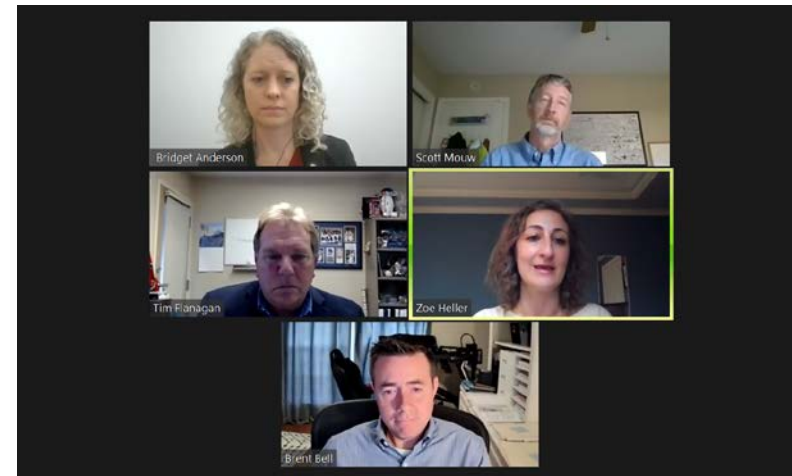
## Heading Into 2021, State and Local Budget Gloom Lingers



People line up outside a medical clinic for Covid-19 testing on Dec. 17, 2020 in New York City. JOHN NACION/STAR MAX/IPX 2020

## Telework

- Only an option for some in industry
- Happened quickly, harder for those starting from scratch
- Generally positive response once technology and schedules fixed
- Return to full-time in-person work may not occur for some positions
- How to address “Zoom fatigue”?



## Vaccination

- CDC issued advice on vaccine priority list, but states make final decision
- SWANA and others advocated for solid waste industry priority as essential workers
- Generally listed as a later priority group
- How to encourage workers to vaccinate
  - Lead by example
  - Rewards
  - Promote vaccination multiple times



**THANK YOU**



## COVID-19 Recovery Planning & The New Normal



## When will vaccines be available to solid waste workers?

- SWANA sent [letter](#) to CDC urging waste sector be prioritized
- CDC: Waste Sector is in 80 million group of “essential workers”
  - This is 2<sup>nd</sup> group after health care/nursing home residents

States have discretion re CDC Guidance

**What will the new normal look like?**

**-Find out at [WASTECON](#) on 1/26-28**