



Snohomish County

Public Works

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Snohomish County Preparing for Possible Temporary Solid Waste Facility Closures as Rail Transportation Issues Persist

Railway service, intermodal container shortage lead to excess refuse at county transfer stations

EVERETT, Wash., September 13, 2022 – The Snohomish County Solid Waste Division is preparing for possible temporary facility closures due to ongoing regional railway transportation issues. Excess garbage is piling up and prompting health, safety and environmental concerns for customers and staff, similar to the challenges during May 2022.

“Snohomish County continues to work closely with Republic Services, Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway (BNSF), Waste Management, local solid waste haulers and federal officials to find an immediate resolution to this potential health, safety, and environmental crisis,” Snohomish County Public Works Director Kelly Snyder said. “We are continuing to experience disruptions in rail service with a shortage of containers.”

Four months ago, solid waste facilities were forced to close for two days to remove excess refuse that built up due to a lack of intermodal containers to transport garbage to landfills. County personnel are again preparing for service delays in the coming weeks and possible shutdowns. This issue continues to affect local Solid Waste facilities throughout the Puget Sound area and into Western Canada. Skagit and Island County Solid Waste facilities have also had temporarily closures during spring and summer of this year due to these ongoing rail issues.

“We are experiencing significant delays in rail service by BNSF to the landfill, but safety will remain our number one priority throughout this emergency,” Snohomish County Solid Waste Director David Schonhard said. “We are working on every possible option to reduce the refuse at our facilities without shutdowns, but it is difficult. We appreciate our customers’ patience during this uncertainty.”

Adding to the uncertainty is the possible nationwide strike by more than 100,000 railway workers. On July 15, 2022, President Joe Biden stepped in and delayed a railway workers’ strike, since it impacts essential services nationwide. The action named an emergency board of arbitrators which provided negotiators a 60-day window to find a solution which ends September 15, 2022. A railway strike impacts

more than just the transportation of refuse, as many goods and commerce utilize railway transportation.

However, the threat of a nationwide railway strike is just one of many possible issues that may impact the transportation of refuse from Snohomish County and other jurisdictions in the state to regional landfills. A strike would mean a complete closure of Solid Waste transfer stations and drop boxes because no refuse could be moved to landfills. This would impact the weekly curbside pick-up of garbage, recycle and green waste for households and businesses.

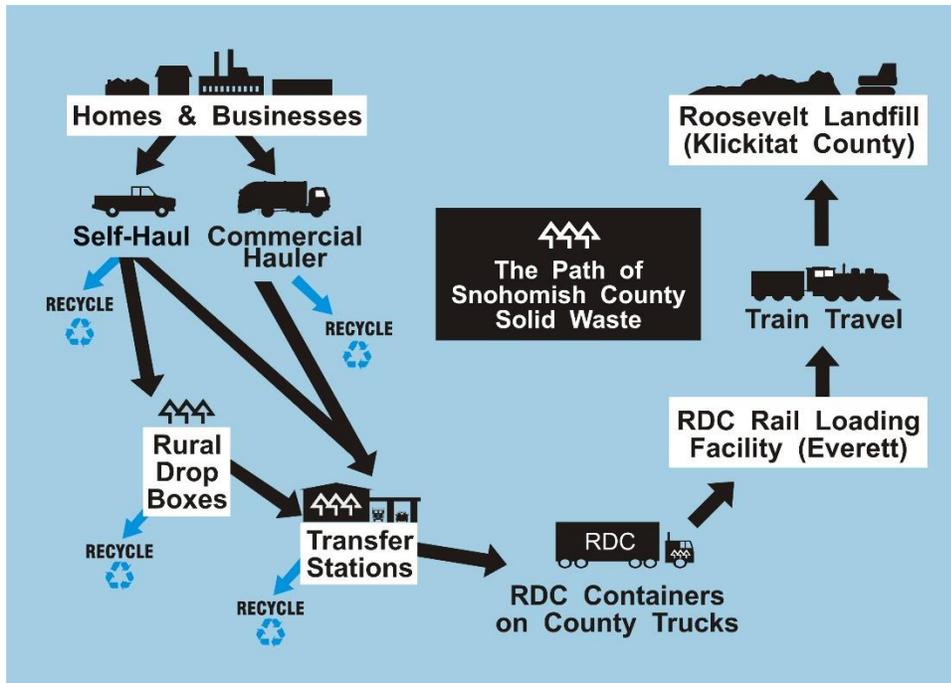
County officials are urging residents to seek out reduce, reuse, recycling options for reusable items. Donating household items, books or clothing that are reusable to thrift stores or other outlets such as selling on community classifieds or market-place community groups online are always a better alternative than throwing them away.

In early January 2022, Solid Waste transfer stations began experiencing the lack of needed containers via rail from BNSF, and during the next five months, garbage was piling up at the facilities. In April, the Snohomish County Council approved an emergency contract with Waste Management Inc. to aid Snohomish County Solid Waste in the removal of excess refuse at local transfer stations. The \$2 million short-term waste transportation and disposal agreement gives county Solid Waste workers the ability to transport more garbage out of county facilities through the end of October. Refuse has been at sustainable levels throughout the summer, but recently began to build up again due to railway staffing issues along with intermodal container shortages. The lack of a daily required number of intermodal containers to haul garbage have impacted the county for the last eight months and continues to cause garbage piles and heightens the risk fires at county transfer stations.

For disruption of services and updates about the Solid Waste facilities, visit:

- www.snohomishcountywa.gov/207/Solid-Waste
- www.twitter.com/SnoCoPW
- www.facebook.com/SnoCoPW

County residents who plan to visit Solid Waste facilities should check the lines on the county website: www.snohomishcountywa.gov/5431/Check-the-Lines



About Snohomish County Public Works

Snohomish County Public Works is responsible for approximately 1,600 miles of county roads, more than 200 bridges and manages about 200 traffic control signals. The department also processes nearly 600,000 tons of garbage per year. Its mission is to focus on safety and mobility while practicing fiscal responsibility and preserving the environment. Public Works has won numerous state and national honors for its work and is the largest department within Snohomish County government with approximately 500 employees plus seasonal staff. Its main office is located at 3000 Rockefeller Ave, Everett, WA 98201. Visit www.snohomishcountywa.gov/PublicWorks or follow the department on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for more information about Snohomish County Public Works.

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