

CONTAMINATION REDUCTION WORKGROUP

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Environmental Quality and Public Works Committee

May 13, 2025



LEXINGTON





Presentation Summary

- Overview
- General approach
- Milestones to date
- Next steps





Project Overview



The Contamination Reduction Workgroup, made up of representatives from areas of Waste Management and the Department of Environmental Quality and Public Works, was formed out of the Waste Digester Task Force to examine and work towards reducing contamination rates in Lexington's recycling and yard waste streams.



The Workgroup has met monthly in 2025 to begin developing a recycling and yard waste contamination reduction plan for implementation by 12/31/2025.



The goal of the comprehensive plan is to reduce inbound contamination rates (currently ~35% for recycling and ~60% for yard waste) to those aligning with or surpassing the national average (17%).



The Workgroup includes members specializing in operations management, collections, enforcement efforts, education and outreach, and recycling and yard waste facility management.





General Approach

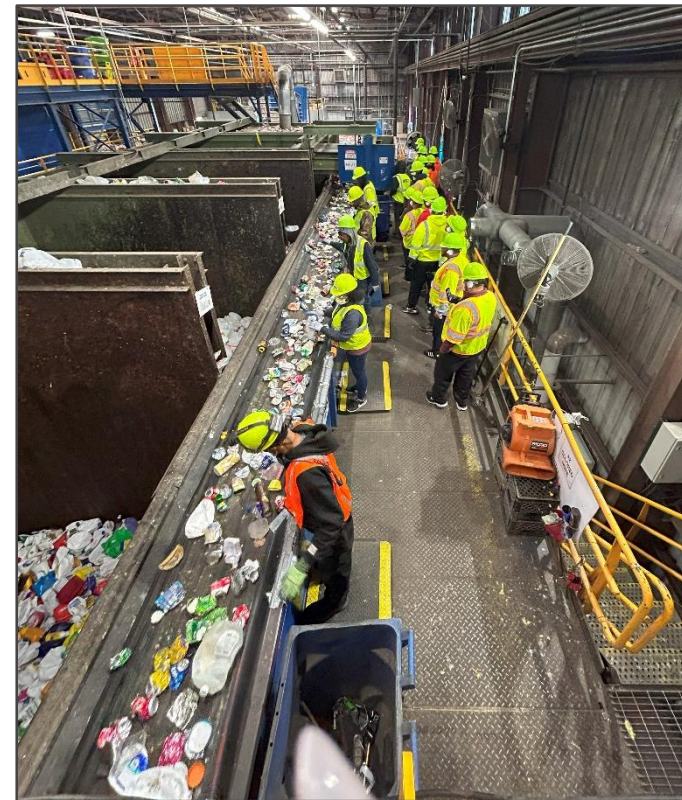
- Staff
 - Inform
 - Empower
 - Celebrate
- Public
 - Inform
 - Enforce
- Processes
 - Carts and dumpsters
 - Audits – facilities, carts/dumpsters
 - Affiliate agreements
 - Cart removal





Staff Milestone: Inform, Empower, Celebrate

- Tours of the Materials Recovery Facility were given to all LFUCG Recycling Program Supervisors, Resource Recovery Operators and Public Service Workers
- Commissioner's Excellence Awards given out to exemplary employees





Public Milestones: Inform

- Recycling Postcard mailed to homes first week of May
- Relaunch Recycle Education Plan process for recycle dumpster requests
- Ongoing outreach: mass and social media, tabling, etc.



Recycling is local.
Please support our
recycling program
by recycling right.

Recycle **ONLY** these items in Central Kentucky.



Recycling **DON'Ts**

- + A recycle symbol does NOT mean an item is recyclable; recycling is local
- + When in doubt, throw it out -- or ask; email or message Live Green Lexington
- + Do NOT bag recycling or put bags in your recycling cart
- + NO medical waste -- IV tubing, needles, etc.
- + NO hoses, chains, clothes or air pillows
- + NO electronics or batteries; visit LexingtonKY.gov/eWaste for electronic recycling info
- + NO compressed gas tanks like propane or helium; visit LexingtonKY.gov/HHW for hazardous waste disposal info
- + NO cookware, lawn furniture or any metal other than food containers

200 E. Main St.
Lexington, KY 40507
LexCall 311 | 859.425.2255

PSRST STD
US Postage
PAID
Permit #1
Lexington, KY



LexingtonKY.gov/Recycle
LexCall 311 | 859.425.2255



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Live Green



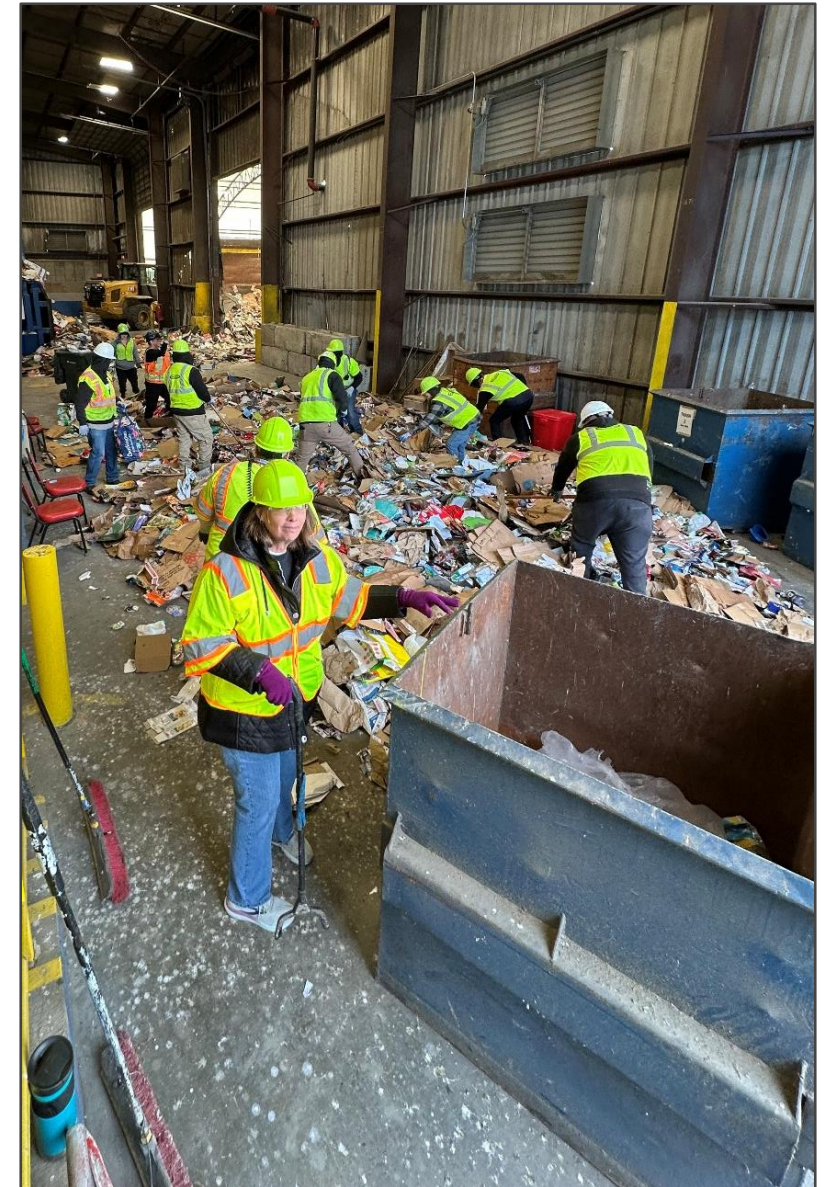
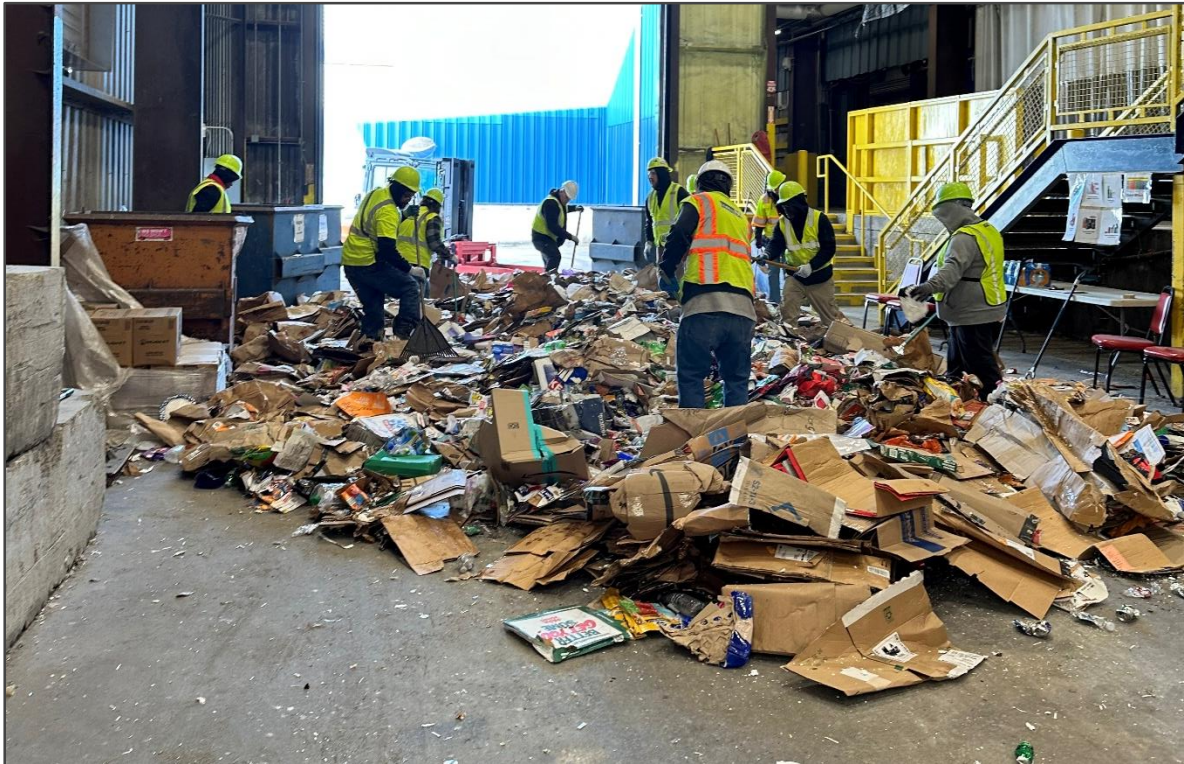
@LiveGreenLex
LiveGreen@LexingtonKY.gov



Process Milestone: Audits

Identifying sources of contamination

Audits performed in March & April 2025 to identify contamination types and hot spots for LFUCG residential recycling routes





Process Milestones: Audits

- Residential Recycling Route Audits:
 - Total weight audited: over **2,400,000** pounds across **64** routes
 - Identified different types of contamination
 - Worst offenders: **car parts, medical waste, food waste**
 - Workgroup has linked highest contamination sources to specific recycling routes and residential areas to focus on in next phase





Proposed Next Steps

- Additional Route Audits (MRF-based)
 - **Commercial and Multifamily** units
 - **Business** routes
 - **Private Haulers** utilizing the Lexington MRF
 - **Downtown** route (twice daily pickup)
- Cart changes
 - Color (cart and/or lid) – national standards and color contrast
 - RFID tags to track carts (pilot in Downtown route area soon)
 - Imprint on lids with acceptable materials (replace stickers)





Proposed Next Steps

- Develop processes for city-service curbside audits
 - **Standards** for levels of contamination: (**green**=pass, **yellow**=needs work, **red**=fail)
 - **Training** for auditors to ensure consistency
 - **Notification** to customers
 - Postcards
 - Yard signs
 - “Oops tags”
 - Determine **consequence** for ongoing contamination





Draft curbside process

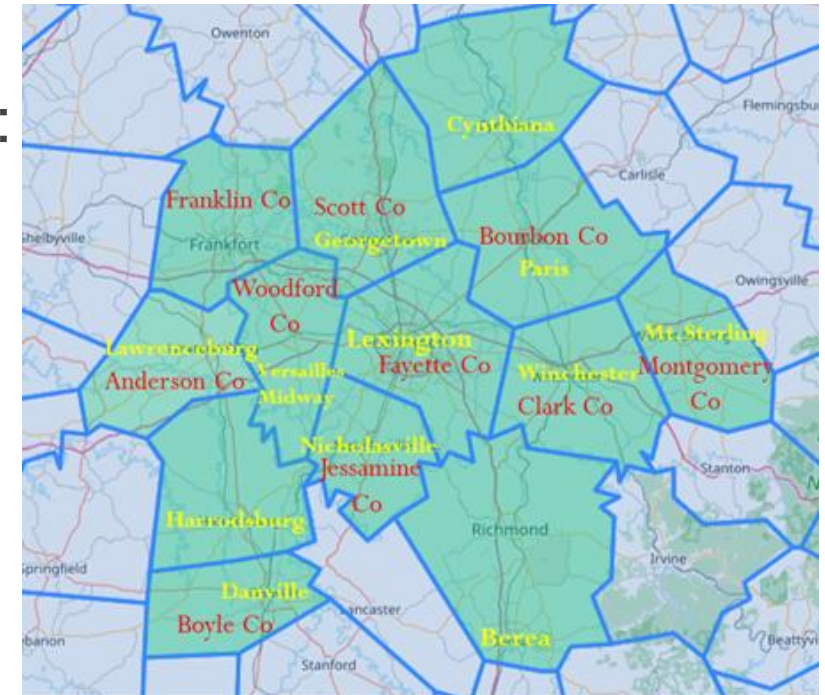
- All routes are audited regularly
- Routes with high contamination identified at the MRF will be audited
- Focus on removal after three serious violations
 - #1 red oops tag
 - Cart contents landfilled
 - General information on recycling provided
 - Specific feedback on mistakes provided
 - Encouraged to call 311 with questions
 - Automatic follow-up triggered
 - #2 red oops tag
 - Cart contents landfilled
 - General information on recycling provided
 - Specific feedback on mistakes provided
 - Contact information for a specific staff person provided, home visit offered
 - Automatic follow-up triggered
 - #3 red oops tag
 - Cart contents landfilled and cart removed
 - Information left on why
- Red strikes fall off after 12 months
- Provisions for carts to be reissued after a certain number of years or proof of new resident





Proposed Next Steps

- Develop processes for Fayette Co. recycling dumpsters
- Develop process to identify and address contamination from affiliates
 - Update MRF Affiliate Agreement
 - Get affiliates to use correct outreach information
- Proposed timeline for contamination rate reduction:
 - 3-5% decrease by end of 4th quarter FY25
 - Additional 5-10% decrease by end of 1st quarter FY26
 - Additional 6-10% decrease by end of 2nd quarter FY26
 - By end of FY27, goal of 10-20% overall decrease in contamination, or 15-25% overall contamination rate





Council Support

- Support for “oops tag” and cart removal process
- Assistance with communication
- Approval of new cart contract
- Approval of new affiliate agreement



Questions?



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