



Contamination Reduction Update

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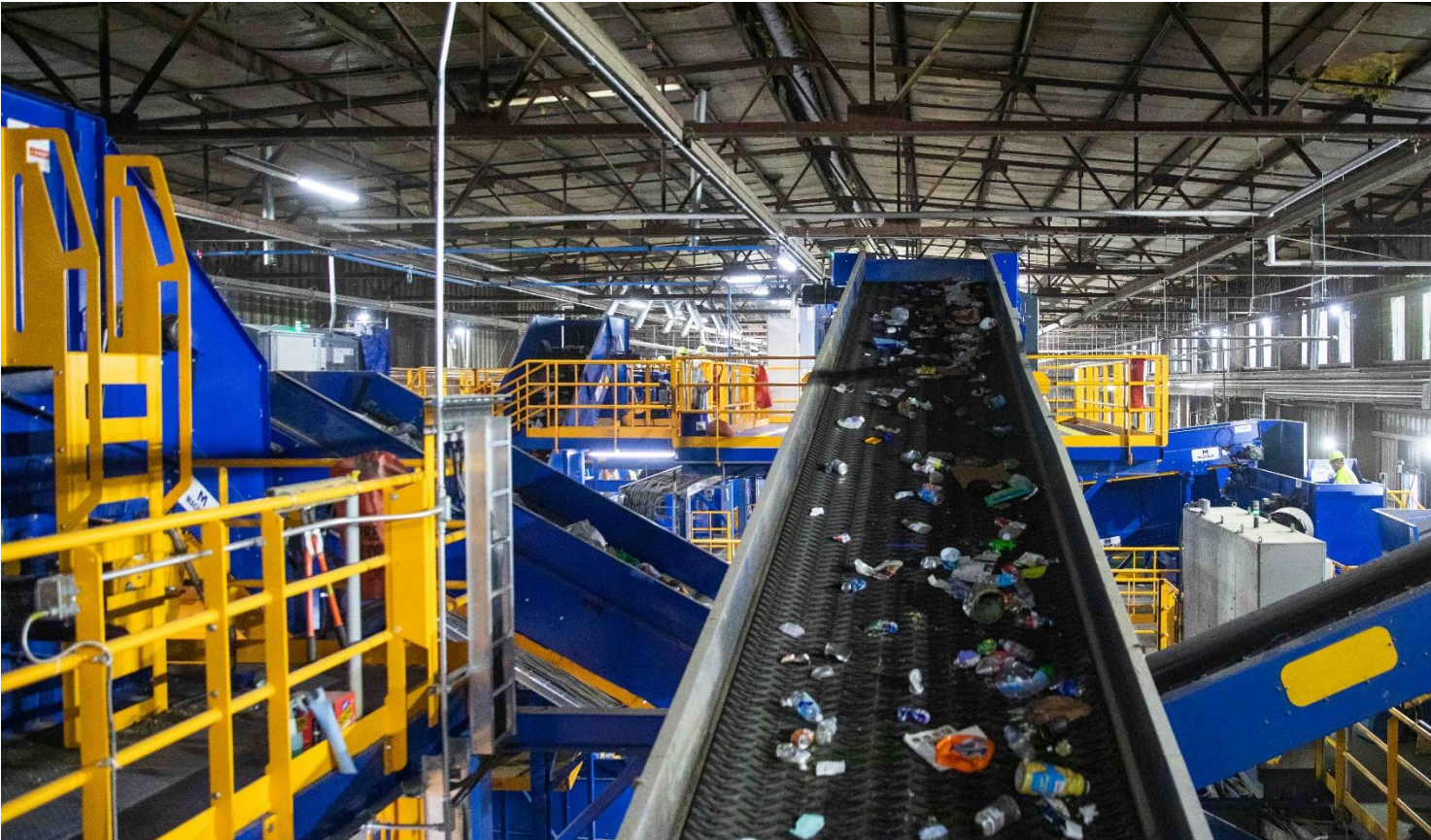
Environmental Quality and Public Works Committee

November 18, 2025





Preview



- Magnitude
- Impacts
- Causes
- Solutions
- Internal Audit Results
- Next Steps
- Anticipated FY27 Impacts



Contamination: Magnitude



Where we started, Jan 2025

30-35% recycling
contamination

50-60% yard waste
contamination



Contamination: Impacts

- Recycling
 - Safety concerns
 - Equipment problems
 - Landfilling of recyclable material
 - Transportation inefficiencies (transport material twice)
 - Potential issues with commodity buyers
- Yard waste
 - Landfilling of yard waste
 - Transportation inefficiencies (transport material twice)
 - No Sorting equipment – accept or reject full loads





Contamination: Internal Causes

- Recycling
 - Mixed loads
 - Inability to see in cart before dumping
- Yard waste
 - Mixed loads
 - Inability to see in cart before dumping
 - Collection of wrong cart (visibility)





Internal Solutions



- Staff tours of Recycle Center
- Improved staff training and accountability re: collection processes
- Potential change to supervisor structure
- Change color of yard waste container lid to yellow (increased visibility)



Contamination: External Causes



- Improper use of recycling/yard waste cart for trash
- Lack of knowledge about what is acceptable
- “Wishcycling”
 - (Knowingly) putting items in the cart that we don’t take, but hoping we’ll be able to divert the material from the landfill anyway



External Solutions

- Increased outreach
 - Mailings
 - Mass media
 - Tabling
- Audits – personalized feedback
- Partner engagement
- Remove consistently misused carts



INITIAL CONTAMINATION AUDIT RESULTS



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Neighborhoods

Collection Day	Area	Details	# of HHs
Monday	Clays Mill	Inside New Circle, west side of Clays Mill	256
Tuesday	Eastland Pkwy	Kilkenny Dr, Raleigh Rd area	260
Thursday	Meadowthorpe	Inside New Circle, before RR tracks/strip mall	547
Friday	Tates Creek	Crosby Rd and River Park Dr area, south of Armstrong Mill	314





Recycling Contamination Audit Results – First 2 Rounds

2025 Recycling Contamination Audit - 9/22-9/26

"Missed You" Results

Non-"Missed You" Results (Percentages Ignore "Missed You" Hangers)

Neighborhood	Date	MY Recycling	Participation Rate	G Recycling	G Recycling%	Y Recycling	Y Recycling%	R Recycling	R Recycling%
Clays Mill	9/22/2025	70	54%	54	66%	14	17%	14	17%
Eastland Pkwy	9/23/2025	155	32%	30	42%	29	40%	13	18%
Meadowthorpe	9/25/2025	238	41%	124	74%	32	19%	12	7%
Tates Creek	9/26/2025	170	39%	54	50%	22	20%	33	30%
Total		633	41%	262	61%	97	23%	72	17%

2025 Recycling Contamination Audit - 10/27-10/31

"Missed You" Results

"Missed You" Results

Neighborhood	Date	MY Recycling	Participation Rate	G Recycling	G Recycling%	Y Recycling	Y Recycling%	R Recycling	R Recycling%
Clays Mill	10/27/2025	112	54%	93	69%	27	20%	14	10%
Eastland Pkwy	10/28/2025	168	34%	45	52%	20	23%	22	25%
Meadowthorpe	10/30/2025	330	39%	168	80%	32	15%	10	5%
Tates Creek	10/31/2025	201	39%	72	57%	31	25%	23	18%
Total		811	41%	378	68%	110	20%	69	12%



MY - Missed You

G Recycling - Green Tag (Pass)

Y Recycling - Yellow Tag (Needs Work)

R Recycling - Red Tag (Fail)



Yard Waste Contamination Audit Results – First 2 Rounds

2025 Yard Waste Contamination Audit - 9/22-9/26

"Missed You" Results

Non-"Missed You" Results (Percentages Ignore "Missed You" Hangers)

Neighborhood	Date	MYard Waste	Participation Rate	G Yard Waste	G Yard Waste %	Y Yard Waste	Y Yard Waste %	R Yard Waste	R Yard Waste %
Clays Mill	9/22/2025	119	18%	22	81%	3	11%	2	7%
Eastland Pkwy	9/23/2025	210	6%	12	92%	1	8%	0	0%
Meadowthorpe	9/25/2025	326	19%	64	85%	5	7%	6	8%
Tates Creek	9/26/2025	248	10%	18	67%	4	15%	5	19%
Total		903	14%	116	82%	13	9%	13	9%

2025 Yard Waste Contamination Audit - 10/27-10/31

"Missed You" Results

"Missed You" Results

Neighborhood	Date	MYard Waste	Participation Rate	G Yard Waste	G Yard Waste %	Y Yard Waste	Y Yard Waste %	R Yard Waste	R Yard Waste %
Clays Mill	10/27/2025	187	22%	46	88%	3	6%	3	6%
Eastland Pkwy	10/28/2025	227	9%	18	78%	2	9%	3	13%
Meadowthorpe	10/30/2025	479	10%	53	95%	3	5%	0	0%
Tates Creek	10/31/2025	296	8%	23	92%	1	4%	1	4%
Total		1189	12%	140	90%	9	6%	7	4%



MY - Missed You

G Recycling - Green Tag (Pass)

Y Recycling - Yellow Tag (Needs Work)

R Recycling - Red Tag (Fail)



Internal Audit Results

- Lots of unwanted plastic
 - Bags
 - Wrap – still attached to cardboard (e.g., drink trays with plastic wrap)
- Some wishcycling – but many items will be acceptable in fall 2026





Next Steps

- Round 3 of Residential Audits scheduled for the week of December 1
- Work on general messaging related to common issues
- Revamp door hangers
 - Possible consolidation of information to simplify and reduce number of different types
 - Translate into other languages
 - Consider alternative methods for “hanging”
- Plan to incorporate contamination tags into regular Waste Management operations
- Continuous Training
- Plan to address multi-family units
- New neighborhoods





Anticipated FY27 Impacts

Requests

- Expanded outreach*
 - Updated campaign w/ expanded placement
 - Updated print materials
 - Living Arts & Science Center partnership for Discovery Room & exhibit
 - Refresh of classroom at MRF



*related to both general contamination messaging and the new recycling list

Questions?



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