

Clear Bag Initiative

Frequently Asked Questions



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When will I have to start using clear bags?

- Town of Placentia will officially transition over to clear bags on September 1, 2024.
- Residents will now place their household garbage in clear, standard- sized plastic garbage bags. Optional— each household may use one (1) privacy bag per week. A privacy bag means standard black non see through bag.

Will there be a grace period if I haven't started using clear bags yet?

- There will be a grace period of adjustment to help customers get familiar with buying and using clear bags until December 31, 2024.

Why are we changing to clear bags for garbage?

The main reasons we are changing to clear bags for household garbage are to:

- Although not necessary at this time, we would like to increase recycling.
- Remove hazardous waste items such as batteries from garbage.
- Heighten safety for collection staff.

How do clear bags help increase recycling?

- Recycling participation rates in our community is low and too many perfectly recyclable materials end up in the garbage.
- While recycling is not mandatory, using clear bags promotes proper sorting of garbage and recycling, creating a greater awareness of what we're throwing out and what we could be recycling and sending on its way to become new products.
- Using clear bags means less garbage going to the landfill, reducing disposal cost, and helping keep collection fees low while protecting the environment.

What is considered a privacy bag?

- A privacy bag can be an opaque (solid not translucent) plastic bag of any colour.
- A privacy bag is for waste items you would like others not to see— often, people place sanitary products, diapers, incontinence products, or other personal items inside a privacy bag.
- Maximum one (1) privacy per week per household.
- Using a privacy bag is optional; you can choose to place all your household garbage in clear bags and not use a privacy bag.

What size privacy bag do I use?

- If you use a privacy bag and set it out for collection on its own, please use a standard-sized opaque garbage bag for your one (1) weekly privacy bag (approximately 26 inches x 34 inches (66 cm x 86 cm)).

How will this change what I'm doing now?

- Apart from changing out your standard-sized black garbage bags for standard-sized clear garbage bags, nothing else will change. Keep putting your household garbage in clear bags and your recyclables into blue bags.

Place your discards curbside in this matter:

- Clear bags (standard-sized, colourless, see through) for all weekly household garbage.
- Opaque (not see through) garbage bag of any colour for weekly privacy garbage.
- Blue bags are for recycling materials only and there is no limit on how many you can set out on any recycling day.

What about my 'kitchen catchers' and bathroom garbage bags?

- The simplest way to go about it is to use smaller clear bags for your kitchen and bathroom garbage that you can put straight into a larger clear bag.
- Or if you use opaque bags for your kitchen and bathroom garbage, when full, simply empty their waste contents into a clear bag and put the empty bags in the garbage too.
- An opaque kitchen or bathroom garbage bag placed inside a clear bag counts as a weekly privacy bag—in that case do not set out another privacy bag.
- You may however put one or more opaque garbage bags inside your weekly privacy bag.
- Do not place opaque bags inside multiple clear bags.

Who else uses clear bags?

- Clear bags were introduced in Central Newfoundland in 2015, Western Newfoundland and Mount Pearl in 2017, and St. John's in 2022. Even areas in close proximity such as Point Verde, Fox Harbour and Ship Harbour use clear bags.

I have a lot of black (white, green, etc.) garbage bags that I purchased in bulk— what do I do with these bags now?

- You can use black or any opaque plastic bags on hand for your privacy bag each week.

I have clear bags, but the package says they're for recycling or yard waste— can I use them for garbage?

- The colour of the bag is important, not what the package the bags came in says so if the bags are clear, you can use them for garbage.
- Do not use clear bags for recycling even if the package says you can. Recycling bags are blue for a reason.

What do I do with incontinence products if I don't feel comfortable placing them in a clear bag?

- Place incontinence products in your weekly privacy bag or place them straight into a clear bag.
- Either way the items are quickly removed from garbage boxes and loaded aboard collector trucks.

What do I do with dog waste bags, kitty litter or Diaper Genie bags?

- Dog waste bags, kitty litter and Diaper Genie bags no matter what colour they are can be put straight into a clear garbage bag or privacy bag.

Do I absolutely have to use clear bags?

- Yes.
- Changing to clear bags really is a simple process and most customers seem to have no trouble changing over knowing it will help increase recycling and protect the environment. The only thing that will be changing is the colour of your garbage bag.

Where can I get clear bags?

- Most grocery and home supply stores carry a selection of waste bags, including clear bags.

What size clear bags do I use?

- Use standard-sized clear plastic garbage bags for all household garbage. Standard-sized garbage bags are approximately 26 inches x 34 inches (66 cm x 86 cm).
- Clear bags for kitchens and bathroom come in smaller sizes.

Will there be an exemption to using clear bags, for example, for medical reasons?

- There is no exemption from using clear bags for garbage.

Why do I have to use clear bags if I'm already diverting as much material from the garbage as I can?

- For residents already doing their best to divert waste and recycling from going to the landfill, keep up the good work!
- Using clear bags should make no difference except for the colour of bags used.
- This mandate is intended to increase participation from households that do not recycle materials by encouraging them to follow the standard of those who do.

How do clear bags help protect collection workers?

- Using clear bags helps protect the collectors by giving them a visual of the contents inside the bag, allowing them to see and avoid sharps or other harmful materials.

Will bag limits for garbage change?

- Bag limits for garbage will not change unless otherwise notified. Current bag limit is 6.
- If your bag limit is five (6) garbage bags per week, set out four (5) clear bags along with your one (1) privacy bag.
- Or set out five (6) clear bags if you do not use a privacy bag.
- A privacy bag counts as a garbage bag towards your weekly bag limit whether it is inside a larger clear bag or set out on its own next to your clear bags.
- There is no limit on the number of blue bags you can set out on any recycling day.

How can I reduce my household garbage output?

- You can reduce your garbage output simply by using clear bags and following a standard recycling practice.
- Be more selective of what you buy and use what you buy more wisely. As a rule of thumb, avoid purchasing single-use items that cannot be recycled, such as plastic utensils, plastic bags, Styrofoam, plastic wrap, and baggies.
- Select grocery items that do not come in packaging that cannot be recycled and when possible, avoid food wastage.
- Organic waste, mostly food waste accounts for over thirty (30) per cent of what we send to

What if I inadvertently place recyclables in a clear bag?

- Although recycling is not mandatory provincially, we encourage our customers to do their part to help increase recycling and protect the environment by placing their garbage in clear bags and their recyclables in blue bags. Recycling matters!
- There is no limit on the number of blue bags you can set out on any recycling day.

What if I inadvertently place garbage in a blue bag?

- Placing garbage materials, especially food waste in with your recyclables can contaminate all the recyclable contents inside the blue bag.
- If you catch it before the collectors arrive, please take the time to re-sort. Put any contaminated materials in a clear garbage bag and any salvageable recyclables in a clean blue bag. Please be mindful to properly sort your discards for next time.

Both clear bags and blue bags are transparent—why can't I use clear bags for recycling too?

- Please do not use clear bags and blue bags interchangeably. Recycling bags are blue for a reason—they alert the collectors that the contents are recyclable.
- Recyclables placed inside clear or coloured bags may be mistaken for garbage.
- For recycling, use only blue bags that are see through and blue in colour or tint.
- Collectors place blue bags into a separate compartment on the compactor truck, apart from where garbage goes, or sort the bags into different streams before disposal.

Are clear bags recyclable?

- There are no programs in place for recycling plastic garbage bags of any colour as it would be difficult to separate the plastic bags from the garbage inside.
- On the other hand, blue recycling bags are baled together and shipped to recycling markets where they are made into new garbage bags.

What do I do with my used batteries if I cannot put it in the garbage?

- Batteries are a hazardous waste not accepted by curbside collection. Never put batteries in with your garbage or recycling.
- Set batteries aside (keeping lithium and alkaline batteries separate) for safe disposal at one of our HHW collection events, or drop off at the Robin Hood Bay HHW Depot Wednesdays and Saturdays from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Or find an authorized recycler nearest you here www.call2recycle.ca.

What if I use more than one privacy bag per week?

- You can only use one (1) privacy bag per week per household.
- If more than one (1) privacy bag is used, only one (1) of those bags will be accepted.
- A privacy bag counts as a garbage bag towards your weekly bag limit whether it is placed inside a larger clear bag or set out on its own next to your clear bags.
- An opaque kitchen or bathroom garbage bag placed inside a clear bag counts as your weekly privacy bag—in that case do not set out another privacy bag.

I'm a bit confused—is there any way to make changing over to clear bags easier?

- Don't worry, after a few weeks using clear bags will become routine, including the parts about how to use a weekly privacy bag and what to do with kitchen and bathroom garbage.
- To keep it simple, you may choose to not use a privacy bag and place all your household garbage in clear bags to your maximum bag limit if needed.
- For kitchen and bathroom garbage you can choose to not use smaller clear bags and use opaque bags instead. When full, simply empty their waste contents into a clear bag and put the empty bags in the garbage too.
- When setting out your discards, remember to check that your garbage is in clear bags and your recyclables are in blue bags.

Where can I find info about sorting my garbage and recyclables?

- For recycling, please give mixed plastic and metal containers a quick rinse before placing them in a transparent blue bag. Place paper and cardboard products in a separate transparent blue bag.
- When you are not sure if it goes in with your recycling or the trash, look it up on the user-friendly Robin Hood Bay Waste Wizard <https://robinhoodbay.ca/information/put-waste-in-its-place/>.
- Recycling info is available on our website at <https://easternregionalserviceboard.com>.
- Multi-Materials Stewardship Board (MMSB) has recycling info available at <https://mmsb.nl.ca/>.

