

Colors and Labels for Solid Waste Containers

Focus on RCW 70A.205.750

New color standards

When waste ends up in the wrong container, it costs money and makes recycling less effective. That's why the Legislature passed [a statewide color code](#) for waste containers in 2025. Consistent container colors make it easier for you to put waste in the right container and for everyone to reap the benefits.

The color code is for containers smaller than 101 gallons like most curbside residential carts and containers in public spaces. Larger containers like dumpsters are not included.

The change will happen over time, **so you may see a mix of colors as haulers give out new colors.**

While waste haulers must buy color coded containers starting in August 2025, customers may not see them until after January 2028.

Gray or black for garbage

Gray or black is for garbage headed to a landfill.

In places without separate recycling or organics containers, gray or black should be used for combined waste.



Blue for recycling

Blue is for recyclables, like bottles, cans, and papers, when collected separately from garbage and organic waste.



Green or brown for organic waste

Green or brown containers are for organics, like food and yard waste, when collected separately from garbage and recycling.



Lids on containers

If a container has a lid, it can be black or follow the same color code for containers. For example, a 96-gallon organics cart can have a green, brown, or black lid, while the body of the container must be green or brown.



Haulers may use lid colors to help drivers during collection routes. For example, business customers may get recycling carts with black lids while residential carts have blue lids.

New label standards

Along with the color code, Washington requires waste containers to have clear labels by January 1, 2028. If the container is provided by a local government or a hauler as part of a collection service, it must have a label regardless of its size or color.

Labels need to be on both the body **and** lid of a container.

Labels can use text, graphics, or both. At a minimum, the label must say the **primary material category**, such as garbage, recycling, or organics.

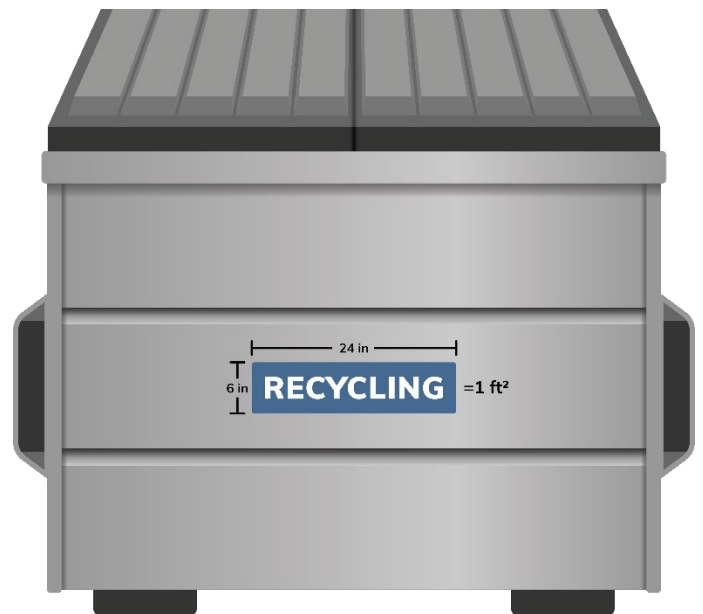


Label color

Labels on containers must follow the same waste color code, even on large containers like dumpsters. For example, while a recycling dumpster can be any color, the text or background of its label must be blue.

Label size

There is no minimum size for labels on containers that hold less than one cubic yard of material. Larger containers must have a label that is one square foot or larger. The label text must be five inches or larger.



Important dates

- **After August 1, 2025** – Waste haulers and local governments may only buy containers that follow the color code.
- **Before January 1, 2028** – All waste containers need a legible label.
- **After January 1, 2028** – Haulers and local governments must provide color-coded containers when giving them to a customer or putting them in a public place.



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