



Issues Brief

City of Yakima e-Newsletter

✦ Refuse Rates Increasing for the First Time in Eight Years

The cost of providing garbage collection service in Yakima has continued to rise over the last several years but the operational rates local residents pay for the service hasn't changed since 2008. As a result, the Yakima Refuse and Recycling Division has had to dip into its reserve account to pay for ongoing operations. Because that reserve account was nearly exhausted, this year the division had to cut more than \$300,000 from its budget, which resulted in staff reductions and the elimination of several programs, like the popular Fall Leaf Bag Pickup program.

In early November, the Yakima City Council approved new garbage collection rates that took effect on December 6th and will help ease some of the financial strain the Refuse and Recycling Division has been experiencing in recent years.

Since the last time refuse rates were increased, the inflation rate has gone up more than 14%, said Solid Waste and Recycling Manager Loretta Zammarchi. The cost to provide refuse service actually has been higher than the revenue the City received from

customers. Any business owner knows that's not sustainable, said Zammarchi. The new rates will help us get the cost of providing service and the revenue we receive for providing refuse service back in balance.

As of December 6th, the rate for a 32-gallon garbage cart went from \$10.00 a month to \$16.02 a month. The rate for a 96-gallon garbage cart rose from \$17.02 a month to \$18.32 each month. The 64-gallon yard waste cart is no longer available. The rate for a 96-gallon yard waste cart increased \$2.00 per month from \$12.82 to \$14.82. Commercial bin rates also went up. The 2-yard rate rose \$2.65 per month, the 4-yard rate went up by \$4.08 per month, and the 6-yard bin rate rose by \$5.51 per month.

Additionally, the overfill fee for carts increased from \$2.35 to \$2.51 while the overfill fee for commercial bins rose from \$12.26 to \$13.73. And, the amount of a call-back charge, which is imposed when a customer requests garbage collection service at a time other than the regularly scheduled time, went from \$12.06 to \$12.90.

In addition to bringing the cost of providing service in line with the revenue received for providing service, the increased rates will allow the Refuse and Recycling Division to build its reserves back up to acceptable levels and to provide funding to replace aging trucks. It is estimated that as of 2016, more than half of the City's fleet of garbage trucks will have exceeded their life expectancy of about 7 years. The aging trucks require more maintenance and repair, which, in turn, leads to higher costs.



New rates for refuse service in Yakima took effect on December 6th. The new rates bring the cost of providing service back in line with revenue received for providing service.

Help Keep Yakima Safe When Winter Weather Hits

Cold winter weather has arrived in the Yakima Valley. The first few snowfalls of the year have served as good reminders that it takes everyone pitching in to keep our area as safe as possible when snow or freezing rain make roads and sidewalks slick.



Home owners and business owners need to keep sidewalks near their property clear of snow and ice.

The City's snow removal plan is focused on keeping streets clear, especially downtown, near schools, hospitals, major intersections, and on hills.

But under a City ordinance passed several years ago, home owners and business owners are responsible for making sure sidewalks near their property are free of snow and ice. Shoveling snow before ice has a chance to form makes the job a lot easier. But if ice does build up on a sidewalk, you shouldn't use rock salt to get rid of it.

The chemicals in rock salt (sodium chloride) tend to make concrete chip and crack, said Yakima Streets and Traffic Operations Manager Joe Rosenlund. Calcium or magnesium chloride-based hot melts are a much better option. Hot melts work like rock salt, but are effective over a wider range of temperatures and won't damage sidewalks, said Rosenlund.

Another common problem arises this time of year when some people shovel or blow snow from their sidewalks and driveways onto City streets. Doing so is not only unsafe, it's illegal.

Moving snow from sidewalks and driveways out into streets creates a serious hazard for drivers, said Rosenlund. It's not just a bad idea, it's against the law. Instead of putting snow in the street and hoping a plow will come by, it's a lot better to pile snow from sidewalks and driveways in your yard or somewhere else, said Rosenlund. Anywhere's better than piling it in the road.



Private contractors, along with City of Yakima crews, help keep streets clear during heavy snow falls.

Help is available for senior citizens, disabled people, or others who need assistance to remove snow near their property by calling the City's Office of Neighborhood Development Services at 575-6101.

Help
Wanted

Be Part of the Solution!

Help reduce panhandling. Instead of giving money directly to panhandlers, donate to local agencies and organizations that provide services to people who are low-income or homeless.

Yakima is our community – Be Part of the Solution!

✦ Take Steps To Prevent Winter Home Fires

Every winter, the number of home fires increases compared to the rest of the year not only in the Yakima area but across the rest of the United States as well. The Yakima Fire Department, the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), and the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) reach out to homeowners to share a few simple tips that can significantly reduce the number of home fires during the coldest part of the year.

Winter fires are mostly preventable, said Yakima Fire Department Captain Jeff Pfaff. A simple common sense approach can go a long way to helping avoid tragedies so that everyone can have a safe winter season.

Each year, the NFPA and the USFA jointly sponsor the *Put a Freeze on Winter Fires* campaign to help raise public awareness about how to avoid home fires this time of year.

Here are a few simple tips that you can follow in order to help prevent winter home fires:

- **Choose holiday decorations that are flame retardant or flame resistant**
- **Use indoor Christmas lights inside and outdoor Christmas lights outside**
- **Space heaters need space – Keep anything flammable at least 3 feet away from space heaters**
- **Make sure your live Christmas tree always has enough water**
- **Stay in the kitchen when you're cooking or turn off the stove if you have to leave**
- **Check electrical cords to make sure they are not cracked or damaged – If the cords are cracked or damaged, Throw Them Away!**
- **Don't ever use your stove or oven to heat your house**
- **Keep lit candles away from decorations or other thing that can burn – Blow out lit candles when you leave the room**



Holiday decorations should be a source of joy, not an ignition source for fires.



Winter home fires, many of which could be prevented, result in more than 900 deaths each year and cause almost \$2 billion in damage.

According to NFPA statistics, space heaters account for about one-third of all winter home fires and about 80% of deaths caused by winter home fires. The NFPA says that cooking is the leading cause of residential building fires during the coldest part of the year, accounting for 36% of winter fires.

USFA data shows that each winter an estimated 108,400 residential building fires occur in the U.S., resulting in 945 deaths, 3,825 injuries, and approximately \$1.7 billion in property loss.

To learn more about how to prevent winter fires in your home, visit the USFA website at www.usfa.fema.gov/winter and the NFPA website at www.nfpa.org/winter.