


Office of the City Manager

January 24, 2013

To: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers

From: Christine Daniel, City Manager 

Subject: Update on Berkeley's Automated Garbage Collection Service

The Public Works Solid Waste Management (SWM) Division began operating the City's new automated/manual collection vehicles in August 2012. These vehicles use an automated arm on the side of the truck to retrieve most carts, and were purchased as part of the overall plan to control the costs of service in SWM. Additional benefits of the trucks include clean-burning engines, improved fuel efficiency, and improved operator safety. With drivers fully trained on the vehicles by November 2012, the new fleet was in operation throughout most neighborhoods in the City. However, as staff had anticipated when developing the collection program, some neighborhoods cannot accommodate automated collection due to a combination of issues including street parking, no gutters, and no driveways. In some of those areas, 2-person collection trucks are utilized rather than the 1-person vehicle. With these considerations in mind, as of the middle of January, collection service with the new trucks is moving forward, and customers are contributing to the success of these improvements to operating efficiency by coordinating with Solid Waste staff to sort out issues and concerns they may have with cart placement.

Coordinated with rollout of the new vehicles, a Cart Placement Guide was mailed to all residential customers, and placed on the City's website with recommendations for setting out their carts. Residents have three options for cart placement:

1. Gutter: Placing carts in the gutter is preferred for collection by the automated trucks, and does the most for cost savings to the City.
2. Driveway Gutter: Placing carts along the driveway gutter, often when street parking occupies most of the street gutter frontage, is a functional alternative for collection, allowing use of the truck's automated arm without the driver having to dismount.
3. Parking Strip: Placing carts on the parking strip is allowed when street parking is an issue, and there is no gutter and no driveway available. With this placement, the driver dismounts from the truck and manually collects the cart. This method of collection has the most cost impact as the additional time for the driver to perform the service lengthens time spent on the route.

When a customer cannot use any of the three recommended options, they are asked to contact 311 to arrange a site visit by City staff to mutually decide on the best location for the carts. Out of the 23,000 postcards that were mailed, staff received 77 requests for site visits. Solid Waste staff met with these customers to locate the cart in a mutually agreed-upon location.

Other questions and comments have come in from customers (see: Frequently Asked Questions, below). In response to customers in areas where parking and topography make preferred cart placement difficult, Solid Waste staff have initiated the following measures:

1. No customer is left uncollected due to cart placement.
2. Staff is not enforcing any specific cart placement. City staff and our customers are working together to resolve cart placement challenges, and locate the best alternatives suitable for the property and neighborhood.
3. Temporarily terminated the use of "Notices" left by collection crews for improper cart placement.
4. In high density parking areas, such as near BART stations, collection crews dismount to collect carts where customers are not able to use gutter space.
5. Street Sweeping and Solid Waste staff have teamed up to resolve customer concerns regarding cart placement on street sweeping days. Carts in areas scheduled for sweeping are collected on the parking strip and returned to the same location to allow the street sweeper to clean the gutter area without interruption.
6. Staff will be posting a video of the new collection truck in operation, linked from the City's Solid Waste Management web page: www.cityofberkeley.info/solidwaste/. The video will help residents understand how the new trucks operate.

Frequently Asked Questions : Cart Placement for Garbage, Yard Waste, and Recycling.

Q. What if there's no empty parking space near my house in which I can place my carts on the street?

A. As shown on the Cart Placement Guide, parking strip placement is an option when recommended gutter placement is not possible. If parking strip placement is not possible, please contact 311 to arrange a site visit by City staff, who will work with the customer to help find the most appropriate location.

Q. I normally put my carts out by the curb the night before. If I do have the carts on the curb the night before and a street parking space then becomes empty later on, then what?

A. Carts will be collected from the parking strip location if a car is parked in front of it.

Q. What do we do about homes that don't have driveways? We can't place carts in the gutter of a non-existent driveway.

A. When gutter placement is not possible, as shown in the Cart Guideline postcard, please use parking strip placement.

Q. I don't have a parking strip, gutter, or driveway for carts – what do I do?

A. Call 311 to arrange a site visit. City staff will assist you in determining a location for your carts.

Q. What do you do for handicapped residents or senior citizens who aren't able to place their carts at the curb location?

A. Call 311. You may be eligible for an exemption from curbside collection.

Q. We live on a narrow street where there is no parking allowed in front of our home. Where do I place my cart?

A. Place the carts on the parking strip (as shown on the Cart Placement Guide), or place in the driveway entrance next to the street.

Q. Placing carts in the gutter can create obstacles for stormwater. What do we do during significant rain to avoid having carts send stormwater runoff onto the sidewalk, possibly flooding properties on the downhill side of the street?

A. Similar to a parked car, carts in the gutter can cause a stormwater flow interruption. If this happens during a storm and you have determined that it may create a problem, place your cart on the parking strip.

As we receive additional questions or other issues are identified that need to be addressed, we'll continue to work with the impacted customers and update the list of Frequently Asked Questions. The information in this memo has been provided to the 311 Call Center, and is available on the City's Solid Waste Management web page: www.cityofberkeley.info/solidwaste/. As updates are made, the website will be updated and 311 will be provided with the revised information.

cc: William Rogers, Deputy City Manager
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