

# WASTE REDUCTION, REUSE AND RECYCLING DURING COVID-19

## Household Guide



As businesses are making plans to reopen, consumers and households can use this time to assess how their actions contribute to the environment and local economy. By following the '3Rs' – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle while being Responsible, we can be safe, save money and protect the environment. According to the US EPA, "There is the potential for households to generate more waste than they did before, but there is also an opportunity to focus on waste prevention, increase your reuse and recycling efforts, and use food more efficiently."

### Reduce

- **PACKAGING** - Look for items with less packaging and packaging that is recyclable in your area.
- **SINGLE USE ITEMS** - Limit your purchases of pre-packaged items. Whole foods are usually fresher and cheaper than those that are pre-cut and pre-packaged in single-use containers.
- **DINING OUT & DELIVERY** - Many restaurants have menus online. When dining at the restaurant, consider using your phone instead of a physical menu. It will cut down on disposable menus or sanitizing of reusable ones. When ordering for takeout and delivery, ask that you not be given disposable utensils, condiment packets, or napkins if you do not need them.
- **FOOD WASTE** - Decrease your food waste by planning meals before shopping, using appropriate food storage, and designating an "Eat First" area in your refrigerator. Consider starting a compost or worm bin to divert food waste from the landfill.

### Reuse

- **SHOPPING BAGS** - Continue to bring reusable bags to grocery and other stores where allowable, otherwise consider asking that your purchases be placed back in the cart and bag them at your car. If you are picking up grocery orders curbside suggest items be placed in reused boxes instead of plastic bags.
- **FACE MASKS** - With the recommendation that we wear face masks in public places, we can choose to use washable masks. Be sure to wash them regularly after use.

### Recycle

- **RECYCLABLES** - Continue to recycle! Recycling is considered an essential service and continuing to sort items for recycling is vital during this time. Recycled material serves as feed stock for producing many needed supplies such as paper towels, toilet paper and packaging. The supply of recyclable materials for processors and manufacturers has dramatically decreased due to the drop in material generated from commercial businesses, so it is important that both businesses and households continue to recycle the proper materials as much as possible. When preparing materials for recycling make sure they are empty, clean and dry. **Do not bag your recyclables—keep them loose in the bin.** Follow the guidelines of your local recycling hauler and only put the materials they accept into your recycling bins.

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- **PPE** - Keep disposable masks, wipes and gloves out of recycling bins! These items are not recyclable in curbside collection.
- **PLASTIC BAGS** - Remember, plastic bags are **NOT** accepted in curbside recycling bins. Recycle your plastic bags, wraps, and other film packaging at drop-off locations only when and where possible. Some stores have temporarily halted collection of plastic bags/wraps. If this is the case, please collect your bags/wraps at home until events change. Bags/wraps can be compressed and stored inside another plastic bag.

## Be Responsible

Sticking to personal sustainability initiatives can go hand in hand with these new ways of doing things. Look at what is in your garbage and find alternatives that result in less waste. There are many ways to stay safe while supporting your local economies and protecting the environment!

## Resources

[EPA Video: Recycling During the Health Crisis](#)

[EPA Video: Don't Recycle Personal Protective Equipment](#)

[America Recycles](#)

[Reduce, Reuse, Recycle](#)

### Southern Nevada Health District

<https://www.southernnevadahealthdistrict.org/coronavirus/guidance-to-reopen-businesses-and-permitted-facilities/>

### Nevada Division of Public & Behavioral Health

[http://dpbh.nv.gov/Programs/OPHIE/dta/Hot\\_Topics/Coronavirus/](http://dpbh.nv.gov/Programs/OPHIE/dta/Hot_Topics/Coronavirus/)

### Washoe County Health District (Reno Sparks Washoe Regional Information Center)

<https://covid19washoe.com/businesses/>

**Nevada Health Response:** Website created by the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services and the Governor's Office to share information and resources statewide

<https://nvhealthresponse.nv.gov/>

800.882.3233  
unrbep.org



BUSINESS  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
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**Nevada Recycles**

Nevada Division of  
Environmental Protection

800.597.5865  
[ndep.nv.gov/nevada-recycles](http://ndep.nv.gov/nevada-recycles)

DISCLAIMER: This guidance document is intended as general information and is not provided nor intended to act as a substitute for legal advice or other professional services. NDEP advises the regulated business community to read all applicable regulations and to check with state and local authorities, including local health districts, for the latest in guidelines and requirements for businesses reopening during the COVID-19 pandemic. All opinions, conclusions, and/or recommendations expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NDEP.