Frequently Asked Questions

Can I get a refund for the trash tags I have?

The City will not be providing refunds for unused tags. Most households would have used up their tags and needed to buy more over the three months period when Brewer’s program was temporarily suspended in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Many pay as you throw communities did not suspend their programs as Brewer did. Residents still have an opportunity to use the tags on occasions they might need to place more than 5 bags curbside for collection.

What are the new rules for curbside pickup?

* All trash must be in bags, except cardboard as long as it is broken down to 2' x 2' or smaller and bundled.
* Each household is limited to 5 bags per week.
* Each bag must be no heavier than 40 pounds.
* Bags larger than 30 gallons in size must be clear or translucent.
* Bags can be placed in containers.
* Residents can put out more than 5 bags by placing an orange Brewer trash tag on bags over the 5 bag limit.

When do these rules go into effect?

The new curbside collection rules go into effect Monday, July 6, 2020.

30 gallons… 40 pounds… Do I really need to measure and weigh my trash?

No. The purpose of these standards is to provide residents a reference point for the upper limit of what is reasonable to place curbside. The bottom line is that bags should be easily manageable. They should be of a size and weight that the collection staff can readily pick up and toss into the truck.

The collection staff will not be measuring or weighing bags. They are professionals and can quickly assess whether a household’s waste meets the standard of reasonableness.

Why am I limited to 5 bags?

Establishing a limit to the number of bags that can be placed curbside each week helps control the City’s collection and disposal costs. It also discourages abuse of the program by people who might otherwise use unlimited capacity to dispose of commercial or other non-household waste.

The good news is that the majority of Brewer households put out one to two 30-gallon trash bags each week. In fact, in 2019, the average Brewer household placed less than 30 pounds of trash and recycling curbside for collection each week. The new rules allow for five times that amount.

What about multi-units? Does the 5 bag limit apply to each address or each household at an address?

The 5 bag limit applies to each household at an address. If you live in a multi-unit (4 units or less), each unit/household is allowed the 5 bag limit.

Why do large bags need to be clear or translucent?

Clear and translucent bags are see-through, thus allowing collection staff to confirm that the items contained therein are acceptable per City ordinance and state regulations. The problem with large, opaque contractor-type and liner bags is that people are able to disguise a lot more unacceptable items in them than in smaller bags that typically are not as heavy duty. One can't easily hide a monitor or other universal wastes in a 30 gallon bag like one can in a 45 or 50+ gallon bag. Contractor-type bags are big and thick, making things like cans of paint, pool chemicals and cleaners, small demolition debris, etc. not easily detectible. Prohibited items not only pose a potential hazard for the collection crew, having too many of them in Brewer waste could result in penalty charges to the City.

What items are prohibited?

Per City ordinance, NO tires, NO yard waste, and NO demolition debris are allowed. Universal, hazardous, and biological waste are also prohibited. The full list is available at <http://brewermaine.gov/public-works/curbside-trash-recycling-collection/>

Why does cardboard need to be broken down to 2’ x 2’ or smaller?

The collection staff have found that larger than a 2' x 2' dimension requires substantially more effort and time to wrestle piles at the curb; it also seems to be the sweet spot for material wedging in containers.  Cardboard that is not in bags adds to collection time and with cardboard markedly more prevalent now than in the past, the majority of houses have some level of cardboard the requires this additional collection step. Again, the collection crew are not the trash police; the 2' x 2' standard just gives a reference point for residents to keep in mind.

When did the City initially suspend the Pay As You Throw trash tag program and why?

The City announced a two-month suspension of the trash tag program on March 29, 2020. On May 12, 2020, the City Council voted to extend the suspension through the end of June 2020. These actions were taken in recognition of the economic hardship facing many Brewer residents as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

When did the City permanently eliminate the Pay As You Throw trash program?

The elimination of the Pay As You Throw trash tag program was part of the draft FY2021 budget presented to the Brewer City Council on May 26, 2020. On June 2, 2020 the Council voted to approve the budget with this change included.

If I need tags, where can I buy them?

Tags will continue to be available for purchase at Brewer City Hall, Brewer Public Library, and via the City’s website. Residents who need to put out more than 5 bags in a given week can do so by placing a tag on those bags over the 5 bag limit.