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NEWS RELEASE

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Subject: Changes in the Waste Management Industry Mean Changes in how we Recycle at Home

Recycling has become a way of life for many Americans. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, more than 34% of garbage is recycled. However, recycling as we know it is at a critical crossroads. The current recycling model is no longer sustainable or viable.

Several factors have led to the current situation. Low oil prices have made it cheaper to produce new materials versus using recyclables. Another factor is that recyclable items are manufactured with lighter packaging, requiring more items to make up a ton while also increasing recycling costs. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, China, which imported and processed more than 45% of the world's recyclables, passed a new law banning the import of plastic waste and imposing greater restrictions on the types of paper waste accepted. The result is that much of the recyclable material formerly processed in China now has nowhere to go, leaving waste management companies with a dilemma. Other countries have filled China's role to some extent, but their waste management systems are not as advanced as China's.

These shifts in the waste management industry are resulting in a complete overhaul in recycling methods and collection that are hitting close to home. The Village of Mount Prospect is asking residents to adopt responsible recycling habits. The biggest issue affecting consumer recycling today is contamination. More and more non-recyclables are finding their way into single-stream containers – things like plastic bags, organic matter (food, liquid and yard waste), rubber hoses, wires and low-grade plastics. These items contaminate recycling and can cause recyclable items to be landfilled. Contamination rates (the percentage of trash mixed with recyclables) have steadily climbed to the current rate of 25%.

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Curbside recycling materials that are contaminated with items that cannot be processed or have not been properly cleaned cause havoc at recycling facilities by increasing sorting time, causing damage to recycling equipment and decreasing the value of commodities. It has become necessary to shift the recycling model to make recycling sustainable.

The main thing residents can do to help are:

- Sort smarter – learn what can and cannot be recycled
- Do not place food waste in recycling containers – including pizza boxes!
- Do not use plastic bags for recyclables
- Make sure items are empty, clean and dry

These steps will ensure that your materials will be recycled rather than landfilled. In the coming months, Republic Services' route drivers will be checking the contents of recycling carts prior to collection. Any contamination will result in a tag with instructions. Residents will be required to remove all contaminated recycling prior to being serviced on their next collection day.

We must all make an effort to accommodate these changes to ensure recycling remains available. When we properly recycle, recyclable materials are reprocessed into new products. As a result, the amount of trash sent to landfill sites decreases, reducing emissions of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. Recycling has many benefits – it conserves natural resources, saves energy and reduces pollution. Recycling will only work if we work together to recycle responsibly!

For more information, please visit the village's website, www.mountprospect.org, or contact the Public Works Department at 847-870-5640.

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