

Multifamily Bulky Waste Collection Study

Executive Summary

June 10, 2024

Managing the collection and disposal of unwanted large household items, also called bulky waste, can be challenging and expensive. Bulky waste collection at multifamily properties includes additional complexity for residents and property managers, specifically: how to make the services clear and accessible to residents, where residents should place large household items out for disposal, and who is responsible for the cost of the collection.

Metro and local governments are working together to implement changes and additions to existing bulky waste services for residents living at multifamily properties. The purpose of the Multifamily Bulky Waste Collection Study was to gather data to better understand how much and how often bulky waste material was generated for collection and estimate the cost to operate a regular on-route bulky waste collection service.

Study Overview

The study was conducted in the City of Gresham and included 39 properties and 2,800 apartment homes or units. Data was collected for 16 weeks from October 2023 through January 2024. Each multifamily property received a weekly bulky waste pick-up service from their garbage and recycling collection company franchised by the City of Gresham. For each day the bulky waste routes operated, data was collected and reported by the collection companies. Key data points included material generation, frequency of utilization of the service, and disposal costs. Material characterization and opportunities for reuse were also part of the assessment.



Study Measures

- **Generation:** how much bulky waste is generated per multifamily household or dwelling unit.
- **Frequency of utilization:** how often multifamily properties placed items out for collection.
- **Cost:** average cost per household or unit to provide this study's on-route bulky waste collection at multifamily properties. *Includes costs related to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) & special handling considerations.*
- **Material characterization:** identifying the most common materials set out for disposal. *Includes EPR materials & materials requiring special handling.*
- **Reuse:** quantifying the amount of items that have the opportunity to be reused once they are set out for collection.

Results

Generation	
Average generation per multifamily household unit per week	Average generation per multifamily household unit per year
2 – 3 pounds	155 pounds

This amount of bulky waste material generation is similar to one mattress and one large chair each year per household.

Frequency of utilization	
Average number of times properties utilized the service	Larger versus smaller properties
2-3 times per month	Large properties utilized the service more frequently than smaller properties

Like other waste streams, the need for bulky waste collection service varies, with higher-utilization weeks and lower-utilization weeks.

Cost		
Estimated cost for the study to operate weekly	Estimated cost for the study to operate twice a month	Estimated cost for the study to operate once a month
\$4.30 per multifamily household per month	\$2.70 per multifamily household per month	\$2.00 per multifamily household per month

Many factors may impact the cost to provide bulky waste collection service, such as: size of a franchise area, number of multifamily properties and their unit counts, specific collection company operations, routing efficiencies, special materials that may avoid or incur additional disposal costs, and equipment investments.

Material characterization	
Most common large household items set out for disposal at multifamily properties	
Furniture (both upholstered and unupholstered)	Mattresses and box springs

Reuse
Assessing the opportunity for reuse through multifamily bulky waste collection
The reuse opportunity is greatest before items are set out at the point of collection. There are a small number of items that are gleaned from the collection point, likely by other residents.

This study took place in the fall and winter when the weather in Oregon greatly reduces the opportunity to reuse large items, particularly upholstered materials, during that time.

Using the results

The results specific to how much material is generated, how often it is generated, and the cost estimates can be used by local governments and collection companies to plan for future services in their jurisdictions. Results will be used by Metro to inform policy planning related to bulky waste collection service.

Also included in this study is qualitative information gathered through six interviews with property managers, conversations with the City of Gresham and the two collection companies that participated in the study.

Six property manager interviews – key takeaways

- Managing bulky waste is an ad hoc, expensive and time-intensive task, with collection needed anywhere from weekly to once per month.
- Having a consistent bulky waste collection during the study that residents knew about enabled residents to properly manage their bulky items, reduced conflict, and eased the burden on property managers.
- For future service planning, identifying the right location for bulky waste collection and enclosure design for each property will be helpful to dissuade illegal dumping and promote cleanliness of the property.

Conversations with City of Gresham and two collection companies – key takeaways

- A regionally consistent list of accepted materials will support residents to use the service. Flyers and other educational materials are an opportunity to remind residents what items are or are not considered bulky waste.
- Determining a designated location and clear signage at each property for bulky waste helps ensure residents and collection companies have safe and convenient access to store and collect items. Smaller properties with limited exterior space may face additional challenges.
- Engagement with property managers is important to ensure that the service functions well and is safe and accessible to residents.
- The types of equipment used to collect bulky waste is important when considering EPR covered materials such as TVs and mattresses, which cannot be mixed with other waste materials or lose recycling viability when disposed in compacting trucks.

What is bulky waste?

Bulky waste is a large household item that is unwanted and ready to be discarded by a household and does not fit inside the regular garbage or recycling receptacles. These items have the potential to be thrown away, recycled or reused. This term includes furniture, appliances, electronic devices, outdoor patio and garden items, miscellaneous household items and household vehicle items. This term does not include household hazardous waste, construction and demolition debris, remodeling debris, yard debris, standard recyclable material, gas cylinders, business waste, or any waste that can fit within the standard garbage receptacle.

