

**Inclement Weather/Emergency Storm Event Policy**  
**Approved January 12, 2011**

It is the policy of SWM to consider the safety of employees and the general public to be the primary consideration when evaluating whether to provide curbside recycling, solid waste convenience or landfill services during a potentially hazardous weather/storm event. Services may be delayed or cancelled consistent with the policies noted below. There also may be occurrences whereby the below policies may be modified based on the specifics of the event and actual conditions.

**Solid Waste Convenience Centers**

Solid Waste Convenience Centers will follow the Orange County determinations with regard to inclement weather services. If the County Manager closes County administrative offices due to an event, Solid Waste Convenience Centers will also be closed. If the County Manager declares a two-hour delay the Solid Waste Convenience Centers (if regularly scheduled to be open that day) will open at 9 am (or two hours later than the normal 7 am opening time). If the inclement weather day is a Saturday SWM will make an independent decision for that day and announce it using our standard communication/announcement practices and we are working on integrating this information into the County's home page so it is readily accessible in more than one location on the web.

**Landfill**

The Landfill will typically mirror the Orange County determinations with regard to inclement weather services, but there may be exceptions. If the County Manager declares a two-hour delay the Landfill will open at 9am (or two hours later than the normal 7 am opening time). If the County Manager closes County administrative offices due to an event, the Landfill may or may not close, instead making an independent decision based on municipal and other collection system customer needs. If the inclement weather day is a Saturday SWM will make an independent decision for that day and announce it using our standard communication/announcement practices.

**Weekly Urban Curbside Service**

SW staff and our contract service provider Waste Industries, Inc. will evaluate conditions (existing and forecast) in order to make service cancellation or delay determinations. Part of this evaluation typically includes traveling the area scheduled for service to assess actual conditions by both SWM staff and contractor. A decision on County administrative offices will be taken into consideration, but an independent decision regarding whether service can be safely provided that day will be made based on actual road conditions.

The decision is typically left to the contract service provider; however SWM opinion and judgment will be seriously considered and the County maintains final decision authority.

If service is not cancelled (and perhaps only a delayed start of collection) every effort will be made to complete the route that same day, and if a portion of a route remains uncollected, it will be collected the next day along with the regularly scheduled routes, as time and conditions allow. Collection will be provided no later than the following Saturday, again as weather and roadway conditions permit. Bins should be placed out by 7 am on the regularly scheduled collection day and left at the curb until collected (again, not later than the following Saturday).

If a scheduled collection is cancelled due to weather there will be a make-up service provided on the following Saturday. If more than one day, during a given week must be cancelled due to weather, only the first day will be rescheduled, weather permitting, for the following Saturday. Any other cancelled services days will not be rescheduled and the next pickup will be the next regularly scheduled collection day. At no time will cancelled collections be rescheduled beyond the Saturday immediately following the cancellations. Rescheduled collections will also not occur on a Saturday if that day is Christmas Day, New Years Day or Independence Day. Rescheduled collections will also not occur on the Saturdays following Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, or New Years Day, as those are the days allocated to make-up the Holiday.

If quantities of recyclables are too great to delay until Saturday make-up day, residents are encouraged to utilize recycling drop-off sites that are located in all three municipalities to accept materials 24 hours/day, 7 days/week.

#### Bi-weekly Rural Curbside Service

SW staff will evaluate weather conditions, including surveying areas scheduled for service to assess actual conditions. SWM will make a decision on delaying or canceling service at the earliest opportunity.

If the decision is to cancel the regularly scheduled collection day the day will be rescheduled for the following Saturday. For example:

*If service is cancelled on a Tuesday, Wednesday through Friday service scheduled will remain unchanged and the Tuesday route collection will be provided on Saturday. Saturday is the make-up day.*

If service is not cancelled during a severe weather event (or perhaps we only begin collection later than normal due to anticipated improving road conditions) every effort will be made to complete the route that same day. If a portion of the route remains uncollected, it will be collected the next day along with the regularly scheduled routes, as time and conditions allow. Collection will be provided no later than the following Saturday, as weather and roadway conditions permit. Bins should be placed out by 7 am on the regularly scheduled collection day and left at the curb until collected (again, not

later than the following Saturday). Even if the start of collections is delayed SWM will announce that collections will proceed as scheduled with the above caveat. In situations where only parts of a route can be safely serviced the driver will record the missed streets/roads and they will be collected as soon as possible, no later than the following Saturday.

If more than one day, during a given week, must be cancelled due to weather, only the first day will be rescheduled, weather permitting, for the following Saturday. Any other cancelled services days will not be rescheduled. At no time will cancelled collections be rescheduled beyond the Saturday immediately following the cancellations. Rescheduled collections will also not occur on a Saturday if that day is Christmas Day, New Years Day or Independence Day. Rescheduled collections will also not occur on the Saturdays following Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, or New Years Day, as those are the days allocated to make-up the holiday.

If quantities of recyclables are too great to delay until Saturday's make-up day, residents are encouraged to utilize recycling drop-off sites that are located in all three municipalities to accept materials 24 hours/day, 7 days/week.

#### Where to Obtain Information on Inclement Weather Curbside Recycling Cancellations

A variety of sources may be utilized to obtain service cancellation information. This information will be posted immediately following cancellation decisions. Residents should assume service will be provided unless cancellation information is posted prior to 7am the day of service. All bins should be at the curb by 7 am.

The following methods may be used to communicate inclement weather schedules to the public:

Paid Advertisements – Makeup schedule for cancelled services may be advertised (if publication deadlines allow sufficient time) in Chapel Hill Herald, News & Observer (Chapel Hill News), News of Orange, Carrboro Citizen and/or the Daily Tar Heel.

Press Release – As soon as decisions are made regarding a cancellation this information will be distributed to local media outlets and local government contacts. Press releases are also posted on the SWM website on the “Latest News” page.

Orange County web site – SWM staff are currently discussing with the County Clerk and Chief Information Officer about providing for inclement weather information regarding cancellations being placed on county's web site in a conveniently accessible location. We expect this to be completed soon.

Solid Waste Department web site – Information regarding cancellations will be placed in a prominent location on the SWM departmental web site on a page specifically designated for inclement weather schedule changes.

Banners – Bi-lingual banners will be placed at entrances of convenience centers announcing convenience center cancellations. Banners contain the telephone number for the SWM Department so the public can be updated via the telephone message announcement.

Solid Waste E-Newsletter – Cancellations will be announced in a special distribution for any curbside recycling service schedule change for those who subscribe to this newsletter; SWM currently maintains about 1,500 subscribers to this monthly distribution. Relevant staff actively promotes signups to this newsletter that will increase readership.

Chapel Hill Community Watch E-Newsletter – The Chapel Hill Police Department Neighborhood Watch and Crime Prevention Office have agreed to use their 3,000 address newsletter to alert its readers to changes in solid waste schedules due to inclement weather. (It is our understanding that the Sheriff's office maintains a similar newsletter but to date they have not responded to our inquiry).

News Articles – Monthly articles regarding varying local solid waste topics typically also include information on SWM's inclement weather policy. These articles will coincide with the seasons most susceptible to inclement weather schedule interruptions.

Solid Waste Management Administrative Offices – Information regarding holiday schedules are available by phone (968-2788), by email ([recycling@co.orange.nc.us](mailto:recycling@co.orange.nc.us)), or walk-in when offices are open, to answer questions regarding holiday schedules. Service schedule information is available through the department phone messaging system when offices are closed due to inclement weather.

### **Key Issues Related to Inclement Weather Facility/Service Decisions**

- Reduced hours at Solid Waste Convenience Centers place more importance on being open and result in more concern in closures, even for inclement weather. Implementation of the Work Group's Convenience Center recommendations would provide District sites open six days/week and surface improvements that would allow more efficient clearing of snow and ice.
- When inclement weather related closures or delays occur in conjunction with holiday closures there will be even more substantial inconvenience for residents. Back-to-back or multi-day severe weather events can also complicate our attempts to provide or reschedule services.
- Over the past 3-4 years SWM has increased observance of holidays (and being closed) for Convenience Centers due to Board of Commissioner inquiries about Center employees previously being required to work most holidays.
- SWM is working with the Clerk to the Board, Emergency Services and Information Technologies Departments to explore additional means in which to advertise inclement weather decisions such as Code Red, Cable TV, etc. As new and potentially effective communication opportunities are discovered they will be implemented.

- Each inclement weather event is different (snow, ice, hurricane, tornado, etc) and SWM must maintain some flexibility in determining service implications. In fact, each snow event is different based on level and timing of roadway maintenance, hours of daylight, temperature, participation type and amount, sun, etc. Additionally roadway/street conditions and potential recovery times differ across the county and even within neighborhoods following an event. Roads shaded from the sun take longer to clear than those that are more open. There will always be the potential for an extraordinary event for which standard policies or practices are inadequate. For example, if hurricane force winds are forecast residents may be advised to not set their bins at the curb to eliminate wind blown litter.
- SWM wishes to make every effort to provide services or open facilities, but will not sacrifice safety of its employees or the public to do so. Ultimately, the final decision with regard to whether a particular street/road is safe to service is left to the truck driver. Sometimes services will simply just not be able to be provided or made-up.
- Our County is in a multi-media area with no dedicated television or radio station and a fragmented newspaper market so that conveying of important service schedule information is somewhat more challenging and requires a multifaceted and even overlapping approach.
- SWM usually waits until the morning to make closure/cancellation decisions for that day rather than making these decisions the prior evening.
- An examination of other community's and private waste company inclement weather collection policies provide no clear uniform policy, but indicate a variety of policies and practices.
- Implementation of a single stream collection system with roll carts would provide additional material storage capacity in the event of delayed or cancelled services.