

Frequently Asked Questions in the event of severe weather affecting waste service delivery

The decision over whether or not to suspend the waste service in adverse weather is made jointly by Forest of Dean District Council joint waste officers and Biffa managers very early in the morning. Uppermost in our minds is public safety. We ask ourselves if there a risk that heavy vehicles could have an accident on the roads and perhaps cause damage to property or injury to people – or potentially worse. We also need to think about crew safety.

The decision has to be made on the average condition across the whole route that is due to be travelled that day. It may well be that access to your property and those nearby is possible but that may not be true for the rest of the collection route on which you are located. Many of the small roads across our district will remain very icy. We want to ensure that our waste collection service is delivered as safely as possible.

In the event that a decision is made to suspend services, we will do all we can to get back to normal as soon as conditions improve.

Below are some of the common questions we are asked:

How can I find out about whether services have been suspended?

We will update the 'bad weather' page on website (www.fdean.gov.uk) during the disruption to keep you informed. Our 'disruption to waste and recycling services' page also gives advice to help residents decide how and when to present their waste and is always available on our site. We will also notify the local radio stations and use social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Alternatively, you may wish to use the automated telephone line (01594 812666).

Where I live the roads look passable. Why have you failed to collect my waste?

Our contractor's depot is based in Cinderford. While road conditions may have improved where you live, it does not automatically follow that it is safe in other areas of the district. When deciding whether the collection vehicles should go out we will not only consider the conditions at the time and in the local vicinity but also the condition of the collection route and whether the vehicles will be able to return to the depot safely.

The disposal sites also need to be open and accessible. The location of the site will change depending on the type of waste being collected. Refuse is tipped in Gloucester, if collected

from the north of the district, or taken to a transfer station in Lydney if collected from the south. Garden waste is also taken to the Lydney transfer station. Kerbside recycling, including food waste, is taken back to the Cinderford depot.

What other safety issues do you face?

The Forest of Dean District Council has a duty of care to any contractor it employs to deliver services on its behalf. In the event of an accident, the council, as well as its contractor could be found liable. The council and Biffa work together to ensure its operations put health and safety considerations to the forefront.

When laden collection vehicles can weigh 25 tonnes and as such stopping distances are much greater than that of a car, even in normal working conditions. Losing control of such a large vehicle could cause considerable damage to property, other road users (including parked cars) or seriously injure - or kill - pedestrians.

At times on the collection route, vehicles are required to reverse out of areas or use turning circles. Again we need to be confident that all operations on the route can be performed safely.

As well as safety issues relating to the condition of the roads, the council and its contractor have to consider the safety of the collection crews given that loaders will be on the ground for much of the day as they collect residents' waste. Hazards such as slips (due to icy conditions underfoot) and falls (due to kerbsides being hidden by snow for example) are a real concern.

I have seen similar vehicles on the road? How can they operate when the council's collection vehicles cannot?

Heavy goods and haulage style vehicles may be on the road but it is important to remember that they may have come from out of the district and may only be travelling only on gritted main roads and between two depots. Our vehicles do travel on the main roads but will predominantly be collecting waste and recycling from smaller side roads which may still yet to be clear of snow and ice; waste collection vehicles need to stop and start frequently and must do so safely.

Why should I take in my recycling and food waste if not collected after 3 days?

We currently operate 11 dry recycling and food waste rounds each day. We do not have spare vehicles to double up on collections to catch up on missed recycling collections. The body of the recycling vehicle is divided into compartments to enable the crews to separate

the different types of recycling we collect, therefore we cannot utilise refuse and garden waste vehicles to make outstanding collections as these vehicles are configured differently.

Once services are resumed, we will concentrate on making the collections that are scheduled for that day. However, if the recycling crews have time at the end of each day - and as long as road conditions allow - they will visit households which have missed a recycling collection earlier in the week.

Therefore, please leave your recycling boxes, blue bag and food waste caddies out for three days following your missed collection. If we are unable to return after this time, please take your containers back in and put it out on your next scheduled collection the following week.

While we appreciate that residents wish to dispose of their food waste as soon as possible, given the freezing conditions, the contents of your food waste caddy will breakdown much more slowly and should not pose a problem.

Why don't you have spare vehicles?

The council's contractor has adequate vehicles to cover day-to-day operations in the event of a breakdown or similar. However, it is not financially viable to have a full fleet of spare vehicles stationed at the depot to cover events such as extra collections in the event of snow.

Why do you cancel the garden waste service during periods of snow?

We do understand that residents pay for the collection of their garden waste and expect a high level of service in return. Nonetheless, we believe that most would agree that priority should be given to the collection of refuse in such circumstances.

In the event of snow, it is likely that the need to offer a garden waste collection at this time will be small.

Please note that the council reserves the right to cancel the garden waste service as outlined in your terms and conditions (these can be found on the reverse of the letter you will have received along with your licences and on the payment page of our website).

What can I do with my outstanding waste and recycling if it has not been collected?

Refuse and recycling may be taken to the local Household Recycling Centres at Broadwell, near Coleford or Hempsted, Gloucester. These sites are normally open between 9.00am-6.15pm every day (except Christmas Day and New Year's Day) but please check that the sites are open first by calling 0845 602 9344.

The Forest of Dean District Council provides recycling facilities across the district for materials such as paper, glass, tins/cans, plastic bottles and cardboard. A full list of these sites can be found on our website under 'Where to Recycle.'

Please only visit these sites once you believe it is safe to do so.

It is likely that the recycling banks will be used heavily during this period. In the event that severe weather conditions are forecast we will try and empty the banks in advance to keep disruption at these sites to a minimum.

Following snowfall we will make every attempt to ensure that bins are emptied regularly but can only do so once weather conditions allow.

Will you collect excess refuse and recycling once services return to normal?

Due to capacity on the recycling vehicles we will only be able to collect extra refuse.

Excess refuse should be put out in sacks and presented beside your black wheeled bin on your first scheduled collection following any disruption.

If you have more dry recycling (i.e. paper, glass, cans/tins, plastic bottles) than normal, these items can be taken to the local recycling bank sites (a list is available on our website under 'Where to Recycle') or the Household Recycling Centre.

Alternatively, please hang on to any additional recycling and put it out on the next available collection using your recycling boxes and blue bag.

Why are you able to make extra collections of refuse but not for other types of materials?

The refuse collection and garden waste vehicles are interchangeable. This means that if we cancel the garden waste collections these vehicles and crew can be used to assist with the outstanding refuse collections.

The recycling vehicles are designed to keep the materials we collect in separate compartments to enable the materials to be recycled effectively. Therefore, we cannot use the refuse and garden waste vehicles to assist with collections of dry recycling and food waste.