

# SWALCO REO Grant

## Recycling Cart Tag Program Overview



# What is a Recycling Cart Tagging Program?

The goal of a recycling cart tagging program is to clean up the recycling waste stream by educating residents on recycling guidelines in their communities. The program utilizes educational materials, including mailed postcards and cart tags placed on recycling bins, to inform residents about what can and cannot be recycled. Ideally, this program creates a shift in recycling habits that reduces contamination levels in residential recycling.

**RECYCLE / RECICLAR**  
 Thank you for recycling these items. Gracias por reciclar estos artículos.

**METAL**  
 Steel & aluminum containers and foil  
 Envases de acero/aluminio y papel de aluminio

**CARTONS/ ENVASES DE CARTÓN**  
 Empty & replace cap  
 Vacío y reemplaza la tapa

**GLASS/ VIDRIO**  
 Bottles and glass jars only  
 Botellas y frascos solamente

**PAPER/PAPEL**  
 Cardboard (flattened), paper cups, office paper, newspaper, magazines  
 Cartón (aplanado), vasos de papel, papel de oficina, periódico, revistas

**PLASTIC/ PLÁSTICO**  
 Bottles, tubs, & jugs only  
 Botellas, jarras y recipientes de plástico solamente

**DO NOT RECYCLE: NO RECICLAR:**

- Do Not Bag Recyclables (No Garbage)**  
No coloque los reciclables en bolsas (No basura)
- No Plastic Bags or Plastic Wrap**  
No bolsas ni envolturas de plástico
- No Tangles, Cords, Hoses or Chains**  
No a los artículos que se enreden, cordones, cuerdas, ni cadenas
- No Bulky Items**  
No artículos voluminosos
- No Foam**  
No espuma/poliuretano

[SWALCO.ORG/WAUKEGAN](http://SWALCO.ORG/WAUKEGAN)

**Dear Waukegan Resident,**

The Solid Waste Agency of Lake County (SWALCO) has received a subaward as part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Chicago Metro Recycling Education and Outreach (REO) grant. Its goal is to improve recycling in the region.

To help achieve this goal, our team will be checking and tagging recycling carts to provide real-time feedback and promote proper recycling habits. Team members may be looking in and tagging your recycling cart. Feel free to engage the team member in conversation.

Please review the guidelines on the other side of this postcard to help you recycle right. Recycling benefits people and the planet by reducing landfill waste, conserving natural resources, saving energy and much more. Thank you for helping create a more sustainable community!

Sincerely,  
The City of Waukegan (SWALCO) and LRS

**Waukegan, Illinois**

City of Waukegan  
100 N. Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue  
Waukegan, IL 60085

**Carta al residente de Waukegan:**

La Agencia de Residuos Sólidos del Condado de Lake (SWALCO) recibió un subvención en parte de la donación por el departamento de la Educación y Difusión de Residuos (RED) en la Área Metropolitana de Chicago de la Agencia de Protección Ambiental de los Estados Unidos. Su objetivo es mejorar el reciclaje en la región.

Para lograr este objetivo, nuestro equipo revisará y etiquetará los contenedores de reciclaje para proporcionar retroalimentación en tiempo real y promover hábitos de reciclaje adecuados. Es posible que los miembros del equipo revisen y etiqueten su contenedor. Si tiene alguna duda, por favor comuníquese.

Por favor, revise la guía de reciclaje en la parte trasera de esta postal para reciclar correctamente. El reciclaje beneficia a las personas y al planeta al reducir los residuos en los basureros, conservar los recursos naturales, ahorrar energía y mucho más. Gracias por ayudar a crear una comunidad más sostenible.

Atentamente,  
La ciudad de Waukegan (SWALCO) y LRS

**Don't bag your recyclables — it makes Loop sick!**

¡No pongas tus reciclables en bolsas — hacen que Loop se enferme!

**I can't eat that!**  
(No puedo comer eso!)

**No plastic bags!**

**Remember to keep all items loose!**  
No pongas tus reciclables en bolsas.  
(Recuerda que todos los objetos deben estar sueltos!)

[SWALCO.ORG/WAUKEGAN](http://SWALCO.ORG/WAUKEGAN)

This project has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement #4072801 to Metropolitan Mayors Caucus.

Este Proyecto ha sido financiado por completo o en parte por la Agencia de Protección al Ambiente de los Estados Unidos, en base al acuerdo #4072801 de asistencia a la Asociación de Alcaldes Metropolitanos.

**THANK YOU FOR RECYCLING**  
**GRACIAS POR RECICLAR**

**LOOKS GOOD!**  
We looked in your recycling cart. What we saw looked good!  
**¡LO HIZO BIEN!**  
Revisamos su contenedor de reciclaje. ¡Lo que vimos está bien!

**OOPS! PLEASE LEAVE THESE ITEMS OUT!**  
**¡UPS! POR FAVOR NO INCLUYA ESTOS ARTÍCULOS.**

- Do Not Bag Recyclables (No Garbage)**  
No coloque los reciclables en bolsas (No basura)
- No Plastic Bags or Plastic Wrap**  
No bolsas ni envolturas de plástico
- No Tangles, Cords, Hoses or Chains**  
No a los artículos que se enreden, cordones, cuerdas ni cadenas
- No Scrap Metal, Wood, or Furniture**  
No deshecho metálico, madera, ni muebles
- No Foam**  
No espuma/poliuretano
- No Bulky Items**  
No artículos voluminosos

[SWALCO.ORG](http://SWALCO.ORG)



# Cart Tag Protocol

1. **Review Previous Data When Available**
  - SWALCO and the waste hauler review and select municipal routes with reported contamination rates and inspect those routes for four consecutive weeks while providing educational materials and feedback to the homeowner
2. **Education**
  - SWALCO, along with the municipality, and hauler mail an introductory postcard to each home on the selected routes that contains recycling guidelines and notification about the cart tag program
  - Cart tags with information and personalized feedback are then
3. **On the Street**
  - A SWALCO street team monitors carts for four weeks in a row, tagging bins, and collecting data on the contamination and compliance rates



This is Pete, a recycling expert on the SWALCO team, he is holding a cart tag marked with a thumbs up for good recycling!

# SWALCO Findings

1

**Soft-approach (meaning no reward or punishment for compliance with program) educational campaign can be successful in lowering the contamination rate in residential recycling over four weeks (supporting data in next slide).**



**The cost to implement the cart tagging program consists of three main things: cart tags, postcards, and team members. For this specific program of 1000 households, the cost per household for all the services listed above will be \$4.50.**

2



3

**A team of two people can inspect approximately 50 homes per hour or 400 homes in an 8-hour day.**



# Data Review

We compared the contamination rate of each route week by week to see the overall behavior change.

	Waukegan
Week 1	60% Contamination Rate
Week 2	40% Contamination Rate
Week 3	30% Contamination Rate

Recycling Cart Weekly Setout Rate 80%

	Zion
Week 1	50% Contamination Rate
Week 2	40% Contamination Rate
Week 3	30% Contamination Rate

Recycling Cart Weekly Setout Rate 65%



**The Good:** We found an overall decrease in contamination rates from week 1 to week 3, indicating that the educational campaign was successful in reducing contamination in residential recycling.



**The Bad:** Contamination persists in some carts despite the education efforts. This can be attributed to multiple household residents not receiving the feedback needed to change behavior, and to the limited capacity for waste in the regular trash cart. In these instances, a punitive approach will be used with the recycling cart being removed.

# SWALCO Recommendations

**Based on the data, SWALCO suggests that more disciplinary actions may be needed, such as requiring contaminated carts to be serviced only after cleaning or levying a fine for contaminated carts to ensure long-term change in contamination in the recycling waste stream.**

