



City of Loveland, Colorado MEDIA RELEASE

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Global Markets and Prices for Plastics Have Collapsed Forcing Materials to be Landfilled

LOVELAND, May 18, 2018 – Global markets for recycling products have declined so significantly that Larimer County may temporarily allow Waste Management Inc. (WM, Inc.) to dispose of some plastics in the landfill that have limited to no market value.

WM, Inc. who is currently under contract to operate the Larimer County Recycling Center recently contacted the County concerning the collapsing prices and end market for specific grade plastics #3, #6 and #7. These types of plastics are commonly thin and flimsy and used to manufacture take-out cups and “clamshell” deli boxes. These plastic containers are typically numbered with the appropriate recycling symbol on the bottom of each container.

Considering these unfortunate circumstances, Loveland, along with Larimer County still encourages residents to continue to deposit their plastics (#3, #6, and #7) in curbside recycling carts until recycling markets improve. Overall, single stream recycling is still encouraged and markets for all other listed materials remain intact and viable at this time (aluminum cans, steel / tin cans, glass, paper, and plastic bottles / tubs #1, #2, #4 and #5).

China, which has accepted segregated single stream recyclables from the US for many years, has recently imposed very tight contamination restrictions and a moratorium on the import of specific recyclables. This and other end market volatility for single stream materials have significantly affected recycling programs across the US for mixed paper and plastics. On a brighter note, WM, Inc. has indicated that they have interest in separating #4 and #5 plastic for potential outsourcing to a domestic plastics mill at no net gain. This outsourcing mechanism for #4 and #5 plastics is very good news for Larimer County and all its customers as most areas across the US have little to no options for plastics #3 - #7.

Larimer County is working closely with WM, Inc. and its local municipalities including Fort Collins, Loveland and Estes Park to raise awareness about this potential market impact for plastics #3, #6 and #7.

“We are following the situation closely and are committed to sharing information in a timely manner with the public, our municipal partners, and business stakeholders throughout the county,” said Stephen Gillette, Solid Waste Division Director. “Larimer County will provide updates as we continue to monitor and research economic solutions to this unfortunate situation.” News and updates about recycling markets will be posted on our websites and other public forums.

For more information, go to <https://www.larimer.org/solidwaste>.

