

NEWSLETTER

A Spook-Tacular Season for Municipal Recycling

With Halloween right around the corner, cities and counties across the Texas Panhandle are preparing for festivals, trunk-or-treats, school carnivals, and neighborhood celebrations. And with all the fun comes a spike in seasonal waste that fills trash cans, clutters parks, and too often ends up in recycling carts where it doesn't belong.

Our region sees it every year. Public works crews deal with candy wrappers blowing across parking lots, especially with our wind, along with mixed-material costumes tossed in recycling bins, plastic décor left behind after events, and pumpkins piling up in dumpsters. A few well-timed reminders can help communities enjoy the holiday while keeping waste streams clean and manageable.

Why It Matters for Local Government

Seasonal contamination, especially foil wrappers, mixed-material costumes, and plastic décor, can disrupt municipal recycling operations and increase processing costs. Proactive communication helps protect commodity quality, reduce landfill volume, and support the strong paper markets highlighted later in this issue.

Municipal Tips for a Cleaner Halloween

Promote Costum Reuse:

Host a Costume-Swap event at the library, parks, or schools to help reduce waste and save families money.

Clarify Proper Décor Disposal:

Paper and cardboard decorations are recyclable; mixed-plastic should be reused year after year.

Encourage Pumpkin Composting:

Host a community composting drop off for pumpkins which can divert it from the landfill.

Batteries + Landfills = A Scary Combination

E-Waste Day is on October 14th, and it is a great opportunity for cities and counties across the Texas Panhandle to spotlight a growing issue in our region: small electronics and battery-powered items showing up in trash bins, recycling carts, parks, alleys, and even at community events.

Items such as earbuds, charging cables, LED lights, toys, vape pens, and other "Fast Tech" gadgets are cheap, easy to buy, and quick to break. When they're tossed out incorrectly, they create real problems for municipal crews.

Battery Fire Risk in Municipal Waste Streams

Across the Panhandle, public works crews regularly deal with small electronics showing up where they shouldn't. These items create serious challenges for local governments, including contamination, equipment damage, and dangerous landfill fires. Due to the dry conditions the panhandle has been experiencing, landfill fires can occur more often.

Even tiny lithium-ion batteries, the kind found in earbuds, toys, LED lights, and vape pens, can ignite under pressure. When they spark inside a load of dry waste, the fire can grow quickly and threaten staff, equipment, and nearby communities.

Our region already faces seasonal waste spikes, wind-blown litter, and contamination challenges. Add drought conditions, and battery-powered items become an even more serious fire risk. E-Waste Day gives municipalities a timely opportunity to educate residents and strengthen safe disposal practices across the Panhandle.

How Cities & Counties Can Honor E-Waste Day



Share a one-day social media reminder



Highlight local e-waste drop-off sites



Add battery-safety message to utility bills



Host a community collection day

These small steps help reduce contamination, prevent landfill fires, and support cleaner recycling streams.

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September Price Update: Paper Continues Its Climb Across the Panhandle

Paper commodities have been on a steady rise for several months, and September keeps that momentum going. According to the KTR Monthly Price Sheet, “White Ledger remains the strongest performer, rising again to \$215 per ton at the direct-mill level.”

White Ledger: \$215/ton	SOP (Office Paper): \$145/ton	OCC (Cardboard): \$105/ton	Deink (#8 Newspaper): \$35/ton	Mixed Paper: \$35/ton
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Metals Show Strength - Especially Aluminum

The metals sector saw notable movement this month. UBCs (aluminum cans) saw a significant jump, reaching \$1,500 per ton baled and \$1,460 per ton loose, reflecting strong demand. Steel cans also improved, with baled pricing rising to \$84 per ton. These increases are particularly helpful for cities with strong aluminum recovery programs or active event-recycling efforts.

With paper markets climbing and metals strengthening, September offers favorable conditions for cities and counties shipping baled commodities.

If your community needs help reviewing materials or scheduling a pickup, contact Katrena Volden at (806) 372-3381.

Let’s keep those materials moving and make the most of strong market conditions!



About the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC)

The Panhandle Regional Planning Commission supports communities across the 26 counties of the Texas Panhandle through regional programs in solid waste, recycling, public safety, economic development, and local government assistance. PRPC works closely with cities, counties, and partner organizations to strengthen services, expand resources, and promote long-term sustainability throughout the region. From coordinating recycling initiatives to supporting community planning efforts, PRPC is committed to helping Panhandle communities thrive.