



Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) Trash Collection Programs

The City of Aberdeen's Trash Sticker System qualifies as a Pay-As-You-Throw trash collection program as labeled and promoted by the EPA. The EPA has a website dedicated to PAYT programs at www.epa.gov/payt/. Aberdeen is listed on the site among Maryland communities that utilize PAYT.

Basic Information (taken from EPA website)

In communities with pay-as-you-throw PAYT programs (also known as unit pricing or variable-rate pricing), residents are charged for the collection of municipal solid waste—ordinary household trash—based on the amount they throw away. This creates a direct economic incentive to recycle more and to generate less waste.

Traditionally, residents pay for waste collection through property taxes or a fixed fee, regardless of how much—or how little—trash they generate. Pay-as-you-throw (PAYT) breaks with tradition by treating trash services just like electricity, gas, and other utilities. Households pay a variable rate depending on the amount of service they use.

Most communities with PAYT charge residents a fee for each bag or can of waste they generate. In a small number of communities, residents are billed based on the weight of their trash. Either way, these programs are simple and fair. The less individuals throw away, the less they pay.

EPA supports this new approach to solid waste management because it encompasses three interrelated components that are key to successful community programs:

1. **Environmental Sustainability** - Communities with programs in place have reported significant increases in recycling and reductions in waste, due primarily to the waste reduction incentive created by PAYT. Less waste and more recycling mean that fewer natural resources need to be extracted. In addition, greenhouse gas emissions associated with the manufacture, distribution, use, and subsequent disposal of products are reduced as a result of the increased recycling and waste reduction PAYT encourages. In this way, PAYT helps slow the buildup of greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere which leads to global climate change. For more information on the link between solid waste and global climate change, go to [EPA's Climate Change Web site](#).
2. **Economic Sustainability** - PAYT is an effective tool for communities struggling to cope with soaring municipal solid waste management expenses. Well-designed programs generate the revenues communities need to cover their solid waste costs, including the costs of such complementary programs as recycling and composting. Residents benefit, too, because they have the opportunity to take control of their trash bills.
3. **Equity** - One of the most important advantages of a variable-rate program may be its inherent fairness. When the cost of managing trash is hidden in taxes or charged at a flat rate, residents who recycle and prevent waste subsidize their neighbors' wastefulness. Under PAYT, residents pay only for what they throw away.

Thousands of communities across the country are using PAYT to manage trash in a way that is fair, economically sound, and environmentally sustainable.



How PAYT (Trash sticker program) came to be in Aberdeen, MD

In June, 1992, Harford County, MD, levied what is termed as a “tipping fee” to all entities that brought trash to the county’s landfill or incinerator. The charge was set at \$35 per ton and the term “tipping” is presumed to mean the act of tipping the trash from a truck and into the disposal site. Prior to June, 1992, there was no tipping fee in Harford County. Based on trash tonnage generated in Aberdeen, MD (a City within Harford County) for the last 7 months in 1992, the City averaged 314 tons of trash per month. Based on the following equation, $314 \text{ tons} \times \$35/\text{ton} \times 7 \text{ months}$, the City paid \$76,930 to Harford County in tipping fee costs for the last 7 months in 1992. City officials were challenged with determining a way to pass this new charge to residents in a way that was fair and equitable. Also in June, 1992, Harford County made the requirement mandatory for solid waste collectors in the County to offer recyclables collection once per week to all residents that they serviced for trash. Curbside recyclables collection at that time included: plastic and glass bottles, metal cans, newspaper and cardboard. County residents (including Aberdeen) now had a curbside recycling option to use, though using the recycling service is not (and never has been) mandatory.

In 1992, Aberdeen initially billed City residents a flat fee on the residents’ water bill to cover the cost of the trash tipping fee. There was no tipping fee charge for recyclables collection. An Aberdeen Citizen’s group questioned the equity of the flat rate system and proposed a pay-as-you-throw (PAYT) system that was researched by the City’s newly hired recycling coordinator. In communities with pay-as-you-throw PAYT programs (also known as unit pricing or variable-rate pricing), residents are charged for the collection of municipal solid waste—ordinary household trash—based on the amount they throw away. This creates a direct economic incentive to recycle more and to generate less waste. City residents were polled upon their preference for a PAYT “sticker” program vs. flat rate (on the water bill) charge. An astounding 30% of the households returned the completed poll to City Hall where the final vote was 70% in favor of the sticker program. The City Council soon thereafter voted upon, and made into an ordinance the City’s PAYT sticker program. The PAYT program began on 3/1/93 and required residents to put pre-paid stickers on trash containers for collection. Recyclables, collected separately, did not require pre-paid stickers. The flat rate system was abolished and residents could control their own individual trash sticker fees by reducing their trash output by recycling.

In summary, the PAYT sticker program offered two major incentives:

First, the “sticker” program was a fair and equitable way for the City to distribute the cost burden of the newly imposed County-induced tipping fee. Some examples are as follows:

A. A small household that generated only one 20 gallon (standard) size can of trash per week would pay for:
 $\text{One } 40\text{-cent trash sticker} \times 52 \text{ weeks} = \20.80 annual sticker costs to cover their own tipping fee. Senior citizens and other small 1-2 person households would be an example of this scenario.

B. A large household that could generate four 32 gallon (standard) size cans of trash per week would pay for:
 $\text{Four } 80\text{-cent trash stickers} \times 52 \text{ weeks} = \166.40 annual sticker costs to cover their own tipping fee. This total is based on the possibility that the household does not recycle.

In 1999, the City’s recycling coordinator conducted a solid waste study that included 11 Aberdeen households. The 11 families weighed their trash and recyclables output for one year. Among other useful data found, over 50% (alone) of the output was paper, paper board and cardboard products that could be recycled. Bottles and cans and other commingled recyclables would take the percentage even higher.

C. If residents in example B decided to recycle, they could possibly reduce their weekly garbage output to two 32 gallon (standard) size cans of trash per week. $\text{Two } 80\text{-cent trash stickers} \times 52 \text{ weeks} = \83.20 annual sticker costs to cover their own tipping fee.

Second, in 1993, Aberdeen discovered that the PAYT sticker program inherently promoted recycling. Residents quickly learned that if they recycled all that was recyclable within their solid waste output, then they could save money on trash sticker fees. The program was initially successful and continues to promote cost savings and stable recycling collection participation. Each recycling household in Aberdeen received a recycling bin (made 50% from recycled plastics) each for paper recycling and for bottles & cans recycling.

Before and After

In 1992, before the PAYT sticker program, Aberdeen averaged:
314 tons of trash of trash per month
37 tons of recyclables per month
(Average number of households = 3520)

In 1993, the 1st year of PAYT sticker program, Aberdeen averaged:
237 tons of trash of trash per month
63 tons of recyclables per month
(Average number of households = 3560)

In 2006, the 14th year of PAYT sticker program, Aberdeen averaged:
264 tons of trash of trash per month
85 tons of recyclables per month
(Average number of households = 4182)

As noted, The City of Aberdeen is located in Harford County, Maryland and is subject to pay the Harford County imposed tipping fee (which is currently \$50.00 per ton). The Aberdeen vs. Harford County collection programs differ greatly however.

Summary of Aberdeen "sticker" PAYT program currently:

1. Pre-paid trash stickers required to be placed on residents' containers for trash pick-up to cover the tipping fee.
2. Collection service costs are covered in the tax base.
3. Stickers sold at 6 retail stores and City Hall. Retailers do not "mark up" the cost of stickers. Stickers are 1" x 5".
4. Trash collection is one day per week.
5. Recycling is offered the same day. Recycling collection is currently dual stream. Green bin provided for paper and blue bin provided for bottles and cans. Bins picked up on alternate weeks. In September, 2010, the program will become single stream recycling with weekly collection of both green and blue bins. Bins should continue to be used.
6. Yard waste is collected 2x/month for 10 months. No stickers required.
7. Bulk pick-up is by appointment. No stickers required. Scrap metal is consolidated at the "yard" in 30- yard roll-off and contractor hauls the metal and pays Aberdeen per ton for the metal.
8. Aberdeen contracted for all curbside collection services from 1993 to 2004.
9. From 2004 to present, Aberdeen utilizes its own small fleet and workers to do all curbside collections.
10. 4300 households on collection route, with est. population of 14,000.
11. Illegal dumping has never been a large issue.
12. Aberdeen offers curbside collection of electronics (TVs, computers). Residents would still sticker these items like they would trash but the collection crew would collect them separately and consolidate them back at the "yard" for pick-up by an electronics recycling company.
13. Aberdeen has a small un-manned 24/7 drop-off site in the City for all curbside recyclables as well as scrap metal, motor oil and antifreeze.
14. Commercial locations and businesses contract directly with waste haulers for collections. The City only handles residential locations such as single family, townhouse and very small apartments (<3 family size).
15. Trash tipping fee was \$35/ton in 1993, \$42/ton in 2000, \$50 ton in 2004 to present.

Any questions ?

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