



TO: Hyun Kim, Interim City Manager
FROM: Ramiro A. Chavez, P.E. PgMP, Director/City Engineer, Environmental Services Department
COPY: Government Performance and Finance Committee; Chantra Reel
PRESENTER: Shane Pettit, Environmental Services
SUBJECT: Amending Section 12.09.140.7 Disposal Rates and 12.09.190.N Dangerous/Hazardous Waste Pilot Projects related to Small Quantity Generators of Hazardous Waste
DATE: November 4, 2025

Initial DS
GMS RALPP

PRESENTATION TYPE:
Request for Ordinance

SUMMARY:

The Environmental Services Department (ES) recommends amending sections 12.09.140 and 12.09.190 of the Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC), relating to fees for solid waste services and restrictions on the handling of prohibited material, to allow for the collection and safe disposal of hazardous materials from specific commercial customers and residents. These amendments would update the pilot project provision enabling the department to collect, dispose, and charge for hazardous waste from commercial entities which currently lack access to economically feasible options for safe disposal, and materials from residents that are not currently accepted for disposal in Tacoma.

BACKGROUND:

The Tacoma Recovery and Transfer Center has a Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Facility for residents of the City of Tacoma and Pierce County. These HHW services are currently funded in part by residential garbage rates as well as interlocal agreements with Pierce County.

Small Quantity Generators (SQGs) are businesses which produce small amounts of hazardous material. Such businesses in Tacoma face a service gap when attempting to dispose of their hazardous waste. The private vendors who once served these customers no longer offer affordable quarterly events for SQGs to dispose of their material and the Tacoma HHW Facility does not accept hazardous waste from small businesses due to operational and regulatory constraints. This leaves SQGs with limited options since contracting directly with private vendors is cost prohibitive unless large quantities of hazardous material are being disposed.

The adopted 2025-2026 biennial budget included a pilot to provide services to SQG's, focusing on a variety of business types and representing all areas of the City. This pilot will begin by working directly with commercial customers in classifying the hazardous materials they produce before offering them an avenue to properly dispose their waste. The intention of the program is to prevent pollution and ensure public health by preventing improper disposal of hazardous waste.

There are some materials, such as ammunition, vape pens, and marine flares, that are not currently accepted from residents at the HHW Facility due to regulatory handling requirements and prohibitive costs. This pilot would also include fee-based services to allow for residents to dispose of these specific material types.



ISSUE:

The TMC currently does not allow for Tacoma Solid Waste Management (SWM) to collect hazardous materials from commercial customers nor charge for disposal of those materials. The TMC also does not allow for SWM to charge residents for disposal for materials not currently accepted by the HHW Facility. Without the proposed amendments, SWM cannot implement the SQG pilot program as approved by Council in the 2025-2026 adopted budget.

ALTERNATIVES:

Maintain Status Quo: Maintain current permissible materials and customers and cancel the pilot project.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact for the TMC update. The specific accepted materials and associated disposal rates will be determined later, shared with stakeholders, and posted on the City website.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Environmental Services Department recommends amending Section 12.09.140 and 12.09.190 of the TMC to allow for the implementation of a pilot project to collect hazardous materials from commercial entities and currently unaccepted materials from residential customers.