

Identified Safety Issues at Meadowgreen Recycling Depot

Identified Safety Issues at Meadowgreen Recycling Depot

While the Meadowgreen Recycling Depot is cleaned up by Waste Collections daily, the depot is frequently in a state of disarray and illegal dumping regularly occurs, leading to high contamination rates in the recyclable materials.

The following table lists the safety issues that have been observed at Meadowgreen Recycling Depot, the frequency the issue has been observed and the level of risk to the public, City staff, or contracted service providers.



Observed Activities	Safety Hazards	Frequency	Safety Risk
Scavenging – people frequently enter the recycling bins looking for deposit containers or other materials	During clean-up conflicts between scavengers and City employees occur and often requires Saskatoon Police Services to disperse scavengers. During collections, more people on site creates a risk of a vehicle accident and people in bins creates the risk that a bin may be tipped that has a person inside of it. Litter from scavenged bins, and improperly placed materials, becomes mobile on windy days blowing debris into traffic lanes and neighboring properties	Daily	High
Needles – evidence of drug-use is present on site, specifically injection drugs leaving used needles on the ground or in the bins	Biological exposure is a risk to depot users that may be dropping off materials, scavengers, clean-up crews and Cosmo staff sorting recyclables are all at risk of injury. Those who are intoxicated have unknowingly placed themselves in harm's way as they are unable to identify when they are in danger. General public and clean-up-crews are also at risk of being exposed to drug residuals when recycling or cleaning the items off the ground.	Daily	High

Observed Activities	Safety Hazards	Frequency	Safety Risk
Illegal Dumping – materials not accepted by the program are left at the site around the bins	These materials enable other safety risks, such as scavenging, fires and encampments. City clean up crews may be injured removing these materials. Those who choose to shelter under these items, put themselves at risk to being crushed/injured.	Daily	Medium
Fires – the recyclable materials are lit on fire, either outside or inside the bin.	Fire could get out of control, harming the person that lit it, other users or Fire Department staff. Bins may need to be replaced, if their structural integrity is compromised by the fire. The design of this particular depot (recyclables, wooden fence, trees, close proximity to residential housing and a gas station) creates a more significant fire risk. Fire fighters also put themselves at risk by addressing fires in a location where needles and other flammable material, illegally dumped, are present.	Approximately 5 per year	High
Encampments – recyclable or illegally dumped materials are used to create temporary shelters	These materials provide inadequate shelter for Saskatchewan winter, causing a risk of freezing, unsafe structures made of highly flammable materials that put occupants at risk of burns or death. This may also increase situations where the occupant may act in an aggressive manor when their items are removed. The unique locations and design of encampments can make it hard for fork truck operators to see the individual (especially in low light) causing an increased risk of the occupant getting crushed by the bin or crushed by their own structure.	Collectively, enough days to amount to about 8 months of the year	High
Contamination – items that do not belong in the recycling program and placed in the bin	Hazardous materials in particular may be a risk for scavengers, clean-up crews, City collections and service providers sorting materials. These items also create a hazard to members of the general public using the depot to recycle.	Motor oil and cooking grease are present at this location on a weekly basis. Propane tanks and helium tanks quarterly	Medium

Observed Activities	Safety Hazards	Frequency	Safety Risk
Other Biological Hazards - animal carcasses have been found at this location.	Depending on the severity, a third-party contractor has been required to complete the clean up to manage the safety risk.	2 per year	Medium/High
Putrescible household garbage as well as human waste has been found at this location.	Health concerns resulting from members of the public coming into contact with human waste and putrescible garbage illegally dumped on site. City workers and those seeking shelter at the depot are also at risk. Human fecal matter is considered a biological hazard and can transmit contagious diseases to those who come in close contact. This material can also contaminate water drainage systems during run-off events.	Multiple times a week	Medium/High

Past Actions to Address Safety at Meadowgreen Recycling Depot

Multiple approaches have been attempted to address the above safety issues at Meadowgreen Recycling Depot. Sustained improvements have not been observed because of these actions.

Education

In 2015, a signage project was completed at Saskatoon's four recycling depots. This involved removal of all the outdated signs, which created confusion and was not consistent from depot to depot. Four large signs were installed to help identify depot location. In addition, decals were adhered to every second bin to illustrate 'Acceptable/ Unacceptable' items and references the Waste Bylaw. Bin decals were updated in 2020, and installation continues into 2021. The goal is to assist with education and to help the Environmental Protection Officers (EPO) enforce the Waste Bylaw.

In-person education was attempted by the Recycling Education Unit (REU), a contracted program funded by the City and run by the Saskatchewan Waste Reduction Council. In 2019, education was provided at the public recycling depots using our contracted vendor, The Saskatchewan Waste Reduction Council (SWRC) by means of the Recycling Education Unit. Staffing consisted of three summer students and/or one full-time employee; the Let's Roll Recycling Team (LRRT). A total of three depots were visited, four times each from July to August, excluding the Meadowgreen depot due to employee safety concerns. LRRT observed 260 vehicles and noted 196 of these (75%) were recycling correctly. Thirty-six people (14%) attempted to recycle unacceptable items; main contaminants included plastic film, wood, Styrofoam and fully assembled boxes. The LRRT identified that using REU was ineffectively means of providing education at the depots and did not recommend similar events in the future.

Past Investigation of Site Redesign, Security and Staffing Feasibility

In preparation for this 2015 signage project, additional options, including security cameras, redesigning the depots, using different containers and hiring onsite staff. It was determined the cost was too high for many of the options or other factors were preventative, including not really knowing what the future would hold for future use of Recycling Depots. Details on options are illustrated below:

- Security Cameras: This option was costly because it would require an employee to review footage each week. Research suggests it is very rare to get footage which allows an EPO to issue a ticket through video evidence. At the time, Solicitors advised that having a non-functioning camera and misleading signs about monitoring was not appropriate.
- Staffing options: This option was very costly. Hiring a third EPO has allowed the City to complete more visits to the Community depots. The City also had the option of summer students, through the SWRC contract for education on location, in previous years educating and handing out education material.

EPO Staffing Levels

Daily, weekday inspections during EPO workhours, currently occur at Meadowgreen Recycling Depot. The amount of time spent by EPOs varies, depending on activity at the depot, as well as EPO workload for the day and requested assistance at the depot.

Two EPOs provided in-person education to users of the Meadowgreen Recycling Depot on two separate occasions in June and August of 2019, which included discussing proper use of depots and acceptable/unacceptable items. In 2020, EPOs were asked to provide a greater presence at the depot. Two EPOs provided a presence at the depot two times a day, for 10-30 minutes at a time. Presence was provided in this manor for approximately eight months (May-Dec), during EPO working hours. EPOs are called in to provide security support when collection operators and/or laborers encounter scavenging activity/resistance, illegal dumping activity, some needle removals and hazardous material removal. On-going in-person education continues at Meadowgreen Recycling Depot, while EPOs are on site each work day.

Private Security Firm Site Monitoring Pilot

A third-party security company was contracted to visit the Meadowgreen depot five times per night for one month in October 2020. The additional security monitoring had minimal benefit for the cleanliness of the site. Unpermitted activity continued at the site between visits by the private security firm's staff, with the most occurring between the last visit by the security staff, at the end of the night and the first visit by a City EPO the following day.