

Government of the District of Columbia



DC Department of Public Works

Testimony of
William O. Howland, Jr.
Director

“Public Oversight Roundtable on the Department of Public Works Trash Collection and Recycling Programs”

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT
Mary M. Cheh, Chairperson

John A. Wilson Building
Room 500
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Friday, March 20, 2015
1 PM

TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM O. HOWLAND, JR., DIRECTOR
DC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
PUBLIC OVERSIGHT ROUNDTABLE ON THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
TRASH COLLECTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAMS
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT
FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2015/1 PM

ALL HANDS ON DECK

- Good morning, Chairperson Cheh, members of the Committee and staff. I am William O. Howland, Jr., Director of the Department of Public Works. I am happy to testify before you today on the Department's trash and recycling collection programs.
- First, I want to testify to the success of Mayor Muriel Bowser's "All Hands on Deck" trash/recycling collection blitz, February 28 and March 1, that followed 10 inches of snow and record subfreezing temperatures during the last two weeks of February.
- During the blitz, we collected most of the trash and recycling that had been missed. These two weeks were notable, not because of snowfall, but because of the extended subfreezing temperatures.
- While we are accustomed to getting snow in February, it usually melts within a day or two. This year, the average daily high temperature was 31F for these two weeks, which is significantly below the average high of 46F for February.
- February 2015 was the coldest month in the last 21 years. Most collections were made in spite of the cold and ice. However, some residents experienced missed collections for one week and some experienced missed collections for two weeks. I understand and appreciate the burden this put on residents. I apologize for the inconvenience.

OVERVIEW

- Now, I will provide an overview of our trash and recycling collection programs.
- DPW provides weekly or twice-weekly trash collection services to about 103,000 households defined as single family homes and multi-family homes of no more than three individual dwelling units.
- About 70 percent of our customers live in once-a-week trash collection neighborhoods, generally, in Wards 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 and constitute the outer ring of the District.
- Our twice-a-week trash collection neighborhoods, generally, are in Wards 1, 2 and 6 and comprise the District's core.

- We provide weekly recycling collection services to all our customers.
- Each day, three-person crews work 32 trash and 18 recycling routes and make about 48,000 collections per day. Every month, we collect 11,000 tons of trash and recycling.
- Last year, we distributed new 96-gallon Supercans and 64-gallon recycling cans to our once-a-week collection customers. At the same time, we distributed new 32-gallon trash cans and 48-gallon recycling cans to our twice-a-week collection customers. We made several observations.
- First, our total tonnage of trash and recycling collections is virtually unchanged from a year ago. However, we have seen a shift in the breakdown between trash and recycling that represents an 18 percent increase in recyclables collected. Our overall diversion rate is 36.6 percent through January.
- We are keeping a close watch on recycling collections because we also have noticed an increase in contaminants.
- Last month we published and distributed a new recycling brochure that provides residential and commercial property owners with the guidance they need to recycle properly.
- We also are developing an electronic advertising campaign to help us reach customers whose primary news resources are the Internet, television and radio.
- This concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer your questions.