On March 23, 2020, the Government of Quebec ordered the closure of all non-priority businesses and services as of 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, March 25 until April 13, 2020.

A list of priority services and activities was posted online and includes garbage collection and residual materials management.

In respect to residual materials management, here is the list of services that are deemed essential:

- Garbage collection and disposal services
- Recyclable material collection and sorting services
- Hazardous material collection and treatment services
- Organic material collection and treatment services, including emptying septic tanks
- Biomedical waste collection and treatment services
- Pest control businesses (for bedbugs, rats and mice in particular)

All businesses that produce inputs or raw materials necessary for priority services and activities must maintain their activities accordingly, bearing in mind the directives from public health authorities.

As these guidelines are being issued, the continuation of priority activities should be managed in alignment with the following specific recommendations, which were developed in collaboration with the competent public health authorities. These could, however, evolve.

Instructions for citizens:

- Avoid going out and keep your refundable containers at home whenever possible. You can easily collect your refund once the situation has returned to normal.
- If you need to go out (groceries, etc.) and want to return your containers, know that the risk of contamination remains low.
- The public is urged to cooperate so that these refundable containers do not end up in the garbage.
- People who use reusable bags for shopping must wash them frequently and take precautions to reduce to risk of contamination. Food safety tips apply.
- Postpone your trip to the eco centre or any other drop-off point and in the meantime do not place the materials or products you had intended to drop off in the garbage.
- Plan or postpone your spring tire changeover appointment until after April 13, 2020.
- At home, used tissues, gloves, masks, wipes and other protective or cleaning products that are potentially contaminated must be placed in a sealed bag and then in a closed garbage container. Such materials must not be placed in the recycling bin or organic material bin.
- When outside the home, if you use tissues, gloves, masks, wipes or other protective or cleaning products, be sure to dispose of them in the nearby garbage after use or bring them back home for proper waste handling.
- The usual health measures apply as well as health recommendations for everyone to deal with the current situation.
Instructions for retailers in handling refundable containers:
- This instruction is maintained as are the related activities.
- Retailers must be sure to fully inform their employees about the health measures that need to be taken and provide them with the necessary equipment. Employees who handle containers must wear gloves, remove them carefully and wash their hands frequently. Surfaces and equipment must be frequently disinfected.
- Retailers are asked to cooperate to prevent the containers from ending up in the garbage.

Instructions for material recycling facility operators:
- Adequate protective measures must be taken by sorting centre managers. Employees must wear gloves, a respiratory protective device (e.g., disposable half-mask with N95 filter), safety goggles and work coveralls. Employers must inform their employees about the health measures to take and make sure employees use adequate protective equipment correctly.
- Respiratory protective equipment must be used according to the CNESST’s recommendations (in French only).
- Facilities served by the Association paritaire pour la santé et la sécurité du travail – municipal affairs sector (APSAM) should refer to that association for support to roll out suitable prevention measures. Business members of Via Prévention can refer to their association for the same matter. Other facilities can refer to the regional public health branch’s Réseau de santé publique en santé au travail for the necessary sorting centre support.
- A guide from the IRSST (in French only) is also available online for the prevention of health and safety risks at sorting centres.
- With the necessary prevention measures in place, the risk of contamination remains low.
- Materials coming into a sorting centre do not need to be left to rest before being sorted.

Instructions for municipal agencies in charge of collection (garbage, organic and recyclable materials):
- The risks remain low. Usual health and protective measures (e.g., wearing gloves) apply. Municipal agencies must inform their employees about the health measures to take and make sure employees use adequate protective equipment correctly.
- It is not necessary to provide specific instructions to citizens (e.g., place bins on the curb 24 hours before the collection).
- To simplify hand washing, wash stations should be set up. Soap and water is preferred, otherwise an alcohol-based hand sanitizer must be used after removing visible stains from your hands.
- In the event of flooding, waste management must be carried out under usual health and protective measures, especially for contaminated materials affected by mould.

Instructions for collection businesses, disposal sites and treatment facilities for organic materials, hazardous materials or biomedical waste:
- The risks remain low. Usual health and protective measures (e.g., wearing gloves) apply. Employers must inform their employees about the health measures to take and make sure employees use adequate protective equipment correctly.
- To simplify hand washing, wash stations should be set up. Soap and water is preferred, otherwise an alcohol-based hand sanitizer must be used after removing visible stains from your hands.
For biomedical waste, companies must check with hospitals to see whether specific measures have been implemented.

It is the responsibility of every organization (business, municipality, retailer or other) to apply these recommendations and to produce a service continuity plan based on their own situation, especially to deal with employee absences.

RECYC-QUÉBEC and the Ministry of the Environment and the Fight against Climate Change will be monitoring changes in the situation and may update these instructions in the coming days. Our teams are still working to provide support to industry players and to share relevant information with the public.