

ACRPlus Waste Management and Covid-19 in Vienna

In Vienna, the main focus during the Covid19 crisis is to keep the waste collection services running. As Waste Management Services in Vienna are provided by the Municipality, along with other essential services such as Street Sweeping or Winter Service, a large pool of manpower is available in order to keep up the most pressing services.

Therefore, the collection of residual waste as well as the collection of recyclables (glass, metal, plastic bottles, beverage cartons, paper waste and garden waste) is continued as usual. The employees start in three different shifts in order to keep social contacts in the common rooms at a minimum.

Other collection services, such as the collection of hazardous waste from households are currently on hold. Citizens are asked to store these items at home and to then dispose of them at a later point. Besides that, all 16 recycling centres (for special waste streams such as bulky waste, etc...) are closed for citizens. Again, citizens are asked to store these items at home and to then dispose of them at a later point. Four out of the 16 recycling centres remain open for businesses. We experienced a reduction in material collected at the remaining recycling centres to 10% to 15% of the quantities that are usually collected. There are about 500 visitors per day. The collection services of kitchen waste from the hospitality industry have been reduced by over 50%.

All waste treatment plants continue to run on full capacity. In Vienna, all residual waste is treated in one of four waste-to-energy plants and no waste is landfilled directly. Therefore we do not have any problem with infectious waste such as masks or tissues from citizens that are Covid19 positive. This waste is collected along with the residual waste (citizens have been instructed to collect the waste in plastic bags that shall then be closed before putting them into the collection containers) and then disarmed during the thermal treatment.

The employees who are in charge for street sweeping have been reduced by over 50% and can now help out in more urgent fields of work like waste collection services. All services have been reduced to a minimum.

Office personnel have been converted to home office, as much as possible. For the employees that still work from the office, we made sure that only one person per office room is coming in, in order to limit contacts to a minimum.

Personnel that are at high risk have been released from their duties.

In order to make sure, that all essential services will continue to be provided as usual, a pool of operative employees is staying at home in order to replace other employees in the field of collection services if necessary.

All employees have been instructed about the new rules of conduct such as regular hand washing (or the use of disinfectant if that is not possible), keeping at least 1m distance to each other, usage of masks and gloves and so on.

We are very proud of the solidarity of our employees as well as of their flexibility that helps us to keep all services that are urgently needed running flawlessly. Also the media response to the waste management services as well as feedback from citizens is consistently positive.