

How much garbage is there?

Residents, businesses, and visitors in Pinellas County generate nearly **10 pounds of solid waste (garbage) per person per day.**

Where does garbage go in Pinellas County?

We use an integrated solid waste management approach combining waste reduction, reuse, recycling, a Waste-to-Energy facility, and a sanitary landfill. Our motto—**“Think Before You Throw”**—means to use the “3Rs” in order to throw less stuff away!

What are the “3Rs”?



Reduce = decrease the garbage you generate



Reuse = use an item again instead of throwing it away



Recycle = collect usable materials separately from trash so they can be transformed into new products

Whatever garbage you don't reduce, reuse, or recycle must be disposed at our Waste-to-Energy (WTE) facility or in our sanitary landfill.

What is the WTE facility?

Pinellas County uses a [Waste-to-Energy \(WTE\) facility](#) to process most of our garbage. The burning of the garbage generates enough electricity to power up to 45,000 households and **reduces the volume of material to be buried in the landfill by 90%.** For example, burning ten cubic yards of garbage reduces the volume to one cubic yard of ash.

What happens to the leftover Waste-to-Energy ash?

Items that do not burn and ash leftover from combustion are collected from the boilers and **transported by conveyor belt to the ash processing building.** Here, metals are removed from the ash for recycling and the remaining material is buried in the landfill.



[Waste-to-Energy \(WTE\) facility](#)

Why shouldn't I just throw metals in the trash?

Metals don't burn, so they just take up space in the Waste-to-Energy facility. Removing metals from the leftover Waste-to-Energy ash takes more effort than recycling them, and it's not 100% effective. Also, **the metal is more valuable if it's recycled directly.**

Why recycle any of our trash since the WTE facility can convert it to electricity?

Many items in our waste stream are **more valuable as raw materials than as fuel.** For example, aluminum cans do not burn or generate electricity, but they are a valuable resource for making new cans. Also, recycling helps keep the volume of waste within the Waste-to-Energy facility's capacity, thereby conserving limited landfill space.

Why do we need a landfill?

Approximately 80% of the garbage received at Solid Waste Operations is processed in the Waste-to-Energy (WTE) facility, but the remaining **20% must be landfilled**, including:

- Ash from the WTE process
- Nonburnable and oversized items that could clog the WTE facility
- All waste when the WTE facility is down for maintenance
- Any waste exceeding the WTE facility's capacity

How many landfills are in Pinellas County?

One landfill. Pinellas County

Our Solid Waste Program



Where does garbage go when you throw it “away”?

Why not expand the WTE?

It would be extremely expensive to expand our WTE facility to process more garbage. Furthermore, as shown in the [graphic on page 16](#), the majority of the garbage disposed at our facility could be recycled. **We can minimize the waste buried in the landfill**—at a lower cost and with more environmental benefits—**by reducing and recycling more.**

Utilities owns the only municipal solid waste landfill in the county.

What happens when our landfill is full?

The **cost of disposal would increase significantly** since excess garbage and ash generated at the WTE facility would have to be transported to other permitted landfills outside Pinellas County.



[Bridgeway Acres Landfill](#)