

The Municipal Waste Collection System and Clean-Up Around “Bins” in Prague

A) Mixed Municipal Waste

There are currently roughly 118 000 collection receptacles for mixed municipal waste deployed around the City of Prague, with a volume of 70 – 1 100 l. Collection and emptying of these is regularly provided for by designated collection companies. The frequency of pick-up ranges from once every 14 days to 7 times a week. The number of receptacles is constantly growing in connection with the growth in new housing and the increasing population of the city.

The obligation to order collection receptacles for mixed waste falls to the owner of a building, who is obliged to order a sufficient volume of such receptacles based on the number of persons that make use of the given building. This responsibility is laid down by the “Decree on Waste”, which is City of Prague Decree No. 5/2007 Coll., which states under Section 6 that a building owner: *“shall ensure from the collection company a sufficient volume of collection receptacles for mixed waste; the recommended volume according to building type is listed in Annex 2 hereto”*.

The recommended volume of collection receptacles for the number of persons making use of a given building is laid down based on the type of building. For single-family homes it is 4 l/person and day, for apartment buildings it is 4–6 l/person and day, and for high-rise housing estates the collection receptacles should be dimensioned to 5–7 l/person and day. This capacity is solely a recommendation. If, for example, a household thoroughly recycles its waste, it is possible to order a “custom” receptacle size and frequency of pick-up in accordance with the principle of “the more you recycle, the less you pay”. The price per receptacle in Prague depends on its size and the frequency of pick-up. The system is set up for citizens so as to motivate them in accordance with the environmental principles enshrined in both the national and EU waste legislation.

If the receptacles by a property are permanently overflowing, it must be checked whether the building owner has ordered a sufficient number of collection receptacles from the collection company, or a sufficient frequency of pick-up. Unfortunately owners often rely on the fact that the collection company will pick up everything scattered around the collection receptacles. Practically everything tends to be left by these receptacles – most frequently this means bulky waste (mattresses, pieces of furniture, armchairs) but it can also include old electronics such as TVs and PC monitors, refrigerators or microwaves.

Figure 1: Example of permanent mixed waste station on a housing estate



Question: Is the collection company obliged to ensure the cleanliness and clean-up of a permanent collection receptacle station in the case that further waste is located in its proximity?

Answer: No. The collection company is only obliged to clean up waste or trash that falls out of the bin while handling the collection receptacles when emptying them. Nevertheless it is possible to pay a collection company a premium to regularly maintain and ensure cleanliness by one's trash bins. If it is discovered that the capacity of the placed bins is insufficient, it is necessary to contact the owner of the property to arrange for rectification of the situation with the collection company.

Dumping of waste by natural persons outside the designated collection receptacles (including e.g. leaving plastic bags next to the collection receptacle) meets the merits of a misdemeanour offence under Section 69 (2) of Act No. 185/2001 Coll., on Waste and on Amendment to Certain Other Acts, as amended. The offender may be fined up to CZK 50 000 for this offence.

A natural person who does not maintain cleanliness and order on a lot they use or own, thereby disrupting the appearance of the municipal district, has committed a misdemeanour offence under Section 33a (1)(b) of Act No. 131/2000 Coll., on the City of Prague. For this offence an offender can be fined up to CZK 500 000. If a lot or part thereof is being used by a person other than the owner, it shall be primarily the user of the lot who is liable for the unlawful behaviour. The Act on the City of Prague also allows for a fine of the same amount to be issued in the case that a legal entity or natural person conducting business commits such unlawful behaviour. Infractions by legal entities and natural persons conducting business is dealt with under Section 33a (2)(b) of the cited law.

Collection and disposal of mixed municipal waste is partially covered by the municipal waste fee, the amount of which is laid down in Prague by the generally binding City of Prague Decree No. 2/2005 Coll. The fee for municipal waste has not been raised since 2005. Thus it has been the same for 12 years yet the costs for collecting mixed waste, including the costs for disposal, have constantly been increasing. The municipal waste fee is municipal revenue and the amount collected annually ranges around CZK 701 million. For comparison – the annual costs for collecting and disposing of mixed waste reached CZK 864 million in 2016. Thus the revenue from the fee does not by far cover the costs for ensuring its collection and disposal.

B) Collection of Recoverable Components (Recycling)

Aside from the collection receptacles for mixed municipal waste, there are approximately 18 000 collection receptacles deployed around Prague for recoverable waste such as paper, glass (coloured and clear), plastic, drink cartons and metal packaging (hereinafter "recycling stations"). There are both above-ground and below-ground stations used in Prague and the size of the receptacles is 120 – 4000 l.

Establishing and determining the location of the sites for these recycling stations is fully in the competence of the representatives of the respective Municipal District Authorities for Prague 1–57. The recycling receptacles, aside from the underground ones, are owned by the collection companies. Regular collection is set up from the lowest frequency (once every 6 weeks – for glass and metal receptacles) up to 7 times a week (especially for paper or plastic receptacles).

Question: Is the collection company obliged to ensure the cleanliness and regular clean-up of recycling stations?

Answer: Yes. For all serviced public recycling stations, there is a set frequency of clean-up, ranging from at least twice a week to a maximum frequency of 7 times a week, 5 times a day (e.g. in the central and tourist-frequented parts of Prague). Clean-up of recycling centres must be provided for within 3 m in all directions from the station site, of which 2 m in all directions must be swept. It is necessary to emphasise that the clean-up of recycling stations is provided for based on different schedules and by different vehicles than those that provide for regular collection of recycled waste. If it is discovered that the capacity of the placed recycling stations or frequency of collection is insufficient, it is necessary to contact the relevant environment department of the Municipal District Authority for Prague 1-57 and if the situation is confirmed on the part of the Authority, an increase in the frequency of collection will be provided for by the city.

Regular collection and clean-up of recycling stations is fully covered by the municipal budget and, in 2016 for example, the costs for ensuring collection and clean-up totalled CZK 365 million. Of that amount the costs for ensuring cleanliness around recycling stations totalled around CZK 50 million a year. Approximately 7 000 tonnes of waste is removed annually as part of clean-up around recycling stations.

Unfortunately these stations are very frequently utilised – particularly in the central parts of Prague – by bars and restaurants to dispose of their waste. As a result, this waste too is cleaned up at the city's expense (see Figure 2). The use of public collection receptacles by businesses is therefore currently prohibited, with public receptacles primarily intended for ordinary citizens to dispose of their waste.

Figure 2: The state of underground container stations in Prague 1



Citizens can make use of the existing network of civic amenity sites to throw out waste - there are nearly two dozen of them within the City of Prague! Citizens are allowed to dispose of waste there for free and a list of them can be found at www.portalzp.praha.eu. (known as the City of Prague Environment Portal).

Figure 3. Entrance to civic amenity site on Podnikatelská ulice in Prague - Běchovice



Figure 4: Civic amenity site on the street Zakrytá in Prague 4



If needed, it is possible to order waste pick-up from all operators to be taken directly to the civic amenity site. This is a paid service, but it comes with the guarantee that your waste will be disposed of in accordance with the valid legislation. All waste can be picked up with the exception of bulk waste (rubble, soil, etc.), which can be dropped off at any City of Prague civic amenity site. The price is set for loading (depending on the amount of waste) and kilometres travelled (from the nearest civic amenity site to the pick-up site and back).

Bulk containers are also placed at various sites over the course of the year for citizens of Prague (every year there are around 5 500 of them with a minimum volume of 10 m³) intended for bulky waste, and from the start of March until the end of November there are also bulk containers for organic waste (e.g. in 2016 a total of 1 486 such dumpsters were placed in the city streets and serviced, each with a minimum volume of 9 m³).

The schedules for these containers can also be found on the website www.portalzp.praha.eu or the web pages of the respective Municipal Districts Prague 1 - 57.

Schedules and locations for bulk containers can also be found on the aforementioned environment portal or on the website of the respective Municipal Districts Prague 1 - 57.

Figure 5: Bulk container for organic waste in Prague - Dubeč

