

County Connection for Week of 07/11/2018
By David Smitherman
Pittsylvania County Administrator

One of the reasons that we instituted the solid waste fee was so that the funding was available to stop people from abusing our sites the way they have been for the last decade.

If you show up at any one of our convenience centers or green box sites on Monday morning, you will see all kinds of garbage - from residents, from contractors, from non-residents - piled as high as the box will support, and also in piles next to all of the dumpsters.

We are already working to have attendants at five of our most used sites, which requires a hiring process and the development of policies to keep them safe. We believe having attendants at these sites will stop most of this abuse, just from having someone there. However, that is not the only thing we're doing.

Contractor abuse

Contractors are supposed to be disposing of all of their trash at the landfill, and paying for the privilege. When you hire a contractor, one of the costs you agree to pay in your contract is a disposal fee. That is supposed to go towards paying for the debris to be taken to the landfill. Instead, many contractors - in Pittsylvania County and on all of our borders - are taking that debris to the green box and compactor sites so that they don't have to pay the \$41 per ton to dispose of it at the landfill. That sounds like double dipping to us. We're going to make that significantly harder for them with our manned sites, and also by installing cameras that can read license plates at as many sites as we can. We can, and we will, be sending the Sheriff's Office to have a conversation with the contractors the first time we catch them. After that, there will be tickets written with financial consequences that will make them think twice before they dump illegally again.

Use by non-county residents

We also know that we get a lot of use around our borders from residents of other localities, even from North Carolina! These sites are only for Pittsylvania County residents' household garbage. They need to take their trash to where it came from. This is something we'll be watching for with the video cameras and attendants as well.

We want to make sure these sites are clean and usable at the very minimum when residents need to use them.

Dumpster diving

Once an item enters the compactor or green box, it is illegal for anyone other than solid waste personnel or our contractor to remove that item from the box. However, that doesn't stop people from doing it, especially when large items like appliances or furniture are thrown away. We are searching for ways to stem this abuse, starting with the site attendants.

We are also exploring a collaboration with the Pittsylvania Pet Center to allow citizens to leave usable “thrift” items such as furniture, bicycles, and working appliances at certain convenience centers to be resold at the Pet Center. This keeps these items out of our landfill, where they take up a lot more space where they’re worth. It also makes it easier for our staff to keep the sites clean.

So here’s my question for you, which I am asking at the end of each article I write. Is there something you’d like to see us change? Do you have suggestions for what we should add to our convenience centers to make your experience better? We want to know!