



# Transfer Station Virtual Tour

## FAQ

### Waste Prevention and Environmental Services

September 1, 2020

#### Overview

Metro protects our clean air and water by ensuring the things we can't reuse or recycle are safely disposed. Metro owns two solid waste transfer stations where you can take trash and recyclables.

The Transfer Station Virtual tour introduces audiences to what happens "beyond the trash can" by examining what happens to trash, food waste and recyclables when they leave our homes. It also highlights how many people contribute to keep our communities clean and healthy for everyone.

#### Has Metro Central always been a transfer station?

The building was originally constructed as a steel mill during World War 2, but the war ended (1945) before the plant was complete. After many years sitting empty, the building was renovated and opened for service as a transfer station in 1991.

#### Why does everyone have to wear PPE?

We wear PPE because safety is #1. A transfer station is a very busy and noisy site, with lots of heavy equipment moving constantly: garbage trucks going forward and backward and front loaders and grapples moving constantly to shift waste and move big steel drop-boxes. With all this activity, we need to stand out so that is why we wear neon/reflective vests. Hard hats are important protection in case we fall down, or in case something falls on us. It's similar to a bike helmet: better safe than sorry. Lastly, all workers wear steel-toed boots. You wouldn't want to drop something heavy on your foot.

#### Does the transfer station smell?

Yes, there are smells that surface at the transfer station but most days they are so mild they are easy to ignore.

#### Why is our landfill so far away?

Landfills are often far away because they require a large amount of space to operate and that usually isn't available in the city. They also create some undesired smells that most people don't want to encounter, they produce gases that need to be controlled and monitored, and they require a high level of traffic from semi-trucks that may cause unwanted crowding on local community streets.

#### Why isn't the garbage burned or shot into space?

Burning garbage releases a lot of harmful gases such as carbon monoxide and sulfur oxide (think acid rain) into the air contributing to air pollution and endangering our health.

There are some facilities that have developed technology to burn trash and capture its energy but they still contribute to air pollution and leave behind a significant amount of ash that then must be sent to a landfill.

Sending our trash into space would be highly expensive (about \$90 million for one rocket trip) and would require a lot of resources to do this. Imagine one or more rockets being sent from every city in Oregon and from every city in the United States, every day. This is why we work hard to make less trash in the first place.

#### The video mentioned food waste being picked up by my hauler. What if my hauler does not pick up food waste?

All cities in the Metro area are transitioning to collecting separated food waste/yard debris. If your hauler does not currently collect this

waste, don't worry, it will by 2025. In the meanwhile, you can continue to put your food waste in the trash.

### **Does the falconry team (birds) live at the transfer station?**

No, the birds do not live at the transfer station. They live off-site at another facility. They have an unpredictable schedule and visit the facility sporadically. We do this so that seagulls and other critters don't learn their schedule and adapt their own habits to avoid them.

### **What kind of birds are part of the falconry team?**

The birds rotate but some of the types of raptors that help out are a Lanner Falcon, Harris Hawk, and a Prairie Falcon.

### **How do I become a falconer?**

Learning about falconry takes many hours of studying. Some of the most important demands of being a falconer are the time, dedication and patience that training, flying and caring for a raptor requires. Some basic requirements include: 14 years old or older, securing an experienced falconer sponsor, acquiring space, housing, equipment and all necessary licenses and permits. To learn more:

[https://www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/license\\_permits\\_apps/falconry/what\\_it\\_takes.asp](https://www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/license_permits_apps/falconry/what_it_takes.asp)

### **What are some of the most interesting things that have come in to the transfer station?**

The transfer station has seen a variety of things over the years; whole boats, a truckload of hot tubs, a truck load of bananas and even live cats. One time someone brought a bazooka into our Household Hazardous Waste facility!

### **What would happen if the landfill shut down and we couldn't take our trash there?**

Metro usually encounters a few days of difficult weather conditions each year that affect the delivery of garbage between its transfer stations and the landfill. In most cases, a

transfer station can hold a few extra days' worth of garbage without affecting services to customers.

### **How does the transfer station benefit the community?**

Transfer stations provide job training and jobs with benefits to the greater Portland area. Through Metro's community enhancement grant program, fees collected at transfer stations are sent to neighboring communities to provide support for things like arts, education, food security, and environmental restoration projects. For example, in 2019, Metro South Transfer Station provided money to the Oregon City Schools Foundation to purchase band instruments for students across Oregon City.

To learn more:

<https://www.oregonmetro.gov/tools-partners/grants-and-resources/community-enhancement-grants>

### **What are some of the most important ways we can prevent waste?**

Waste prevention begins with purchasing less and using less. That means resisting upgrades on electronics, buying used things such as clothes or toys, and finding ways to repair and use what you have for longer before replacing them. It also means investing in durable and reusable items, avoiding single-use items (like plastic silverware or paper napkins), and avoiding items with lots of packaging. Some communities set up lending libraries to borrow tools and other items rather than buying. We can also hold businesses and corporations accountable by writing letters to express our opinions and request zero waste products.

### **What happens when the landfill is full?**

Once a landfill is full we have to "cap" it off. With a liner system at the bottom of the landfill, they cover the whole site with layers of compacted clay and synthetic (man-made) material. Topsoil is then added over the clay. Once a landfill has been properly capped, the site can be used for other purposes such as a park or be repurposed as a wildlife habitat.

### How do I get a job at a transfer station?

There are lots of different paths to get a job at a transfer station, but many folks begin with a passion or an interest in the environment. That's why we have transfer stations: to protect the environment and the health of people by responsibly handling people's trash. Probably the most important trait for a good transfer station worker is what we call *situational awareness*, or an ability to sense all the various activities going on at all times, even though you may not be directly involved. It's a lot like being on a soccer or other sports team—you may not be the one with the ball at any given moment, but to be really good it helps to be aware of where your teammates and the opponent's players are at all times *and* where they are going. That takes practice. There are lots of different jobs, from greeting customers, to collecting the money, to showing customers to the right spot (those folks are called "spotters"), to checking the loads of waste for unsafe materials (e.g., asbestos, chemicals, etc.), pulling out recyclables, or operating the heavy equipment. Check out Metro's website for jobs:

<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/oregonmetro>

### Is wood accepted, and if so, what do you do with it?

The transfer station accepts clean untreated (no paint or chemical) wood. There is no real demand for mulch or composting and it's often not "clean" enough to make paper with it. So instead, an energy company picks it up and they sell it to a paper mill which burns it and captures the heat value and generates electricity.

### What other household stuff is considered "Hazardous"?

Common types of household hazardous waste include paint, batteries, fluorescent light bulbs, solvents, medical sharps, pesticides, fertilizers, poisons and aerosol spray products. These items should not be put in your regular trash.

### Do you accept Styrofoam?

Currently, **South** Household Hazardous Waste Facility accepts clean Styrofoam.

### What if you have big stuff like couches and mattresses but can't fit them in your car?

You can call your garbage hauler and they can pick up your bulky item for a small fee.

### What are the hours for the Transfer Stations and Household Hazardous Waste facilities?

#### Metro Central Station

6161 NW 61st Ave., Portland

Recorded info. line: 503-223-6788

Transfer station hours:

8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily

Household hazardous waste

hours: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Monday to Saturday, closed Sundays.

#### Metro South Station

2001 Washington St., Oregon City

Recorded info. line: 503-657-2872

Transfer station hours:

Spring/summer hours

(March 1 to Sept. 30)

7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily

Fall/winter hours

(Oct. 1 to Feb. 28)

7 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily

Household hazardous waste

hours: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Monday to Saturday, closed Sundays.

Transfer stations and household hazardous

waste facilities are closed Thanksgiving,

Christmas and New Year's Day.

### How much does it cost to drop off stuff?

The minimum fee for household trash begins at \$28. Fees increase by weight, type of trash and if it is covered. To learn more about fees and prepping your load, visit:

<https://www.oregonmetro.gov/sites/default/files/2020/06/29/Transfer-station-factsheet-July%202020.pdf>