

November 30, 2020

Governor

Office

Address

City, State Zip

Dear Governor,

The National Waste & Recycling Association (NWRA) is the voice of the private-sector waste and recycling industry that is essential to preventing the spread of disease and illness as well as maintaining the quality of American life. The delivery of waste and recycling services impacts all healthcare, residential, commercial and industrial properties on a daily basis.

The Federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) is recommending that essential workers should be prioritized to receive a COVID-19 vaccine after it has been administered to healthcare workers. Reports indicate that states will have primary responsibility for carrying this out. NWRA requests that your state include the waste and recycling industry as part of its vaccine distribution to essential workers.

During this national emergency, NWRA members have been classified by the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Administration (CISA) as “essential” and are listed under five different “Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers” headings in the CISA 4.0 guidelines - "Healthcare / Public Health," "Critical Manufacturing," "Public Works and Infrastructure Support Services," "Hazardous Materials" and "Transportation and Logistics.”

Furthermore, some of our members in the healthcare waste sector collect and manage regulated medical waste and sharps waste. In doing so, they visit all manner of healthcare settings including hospitals, emergency rooms, long-term care facilities and doctors’ offices as well as pharmaceutical and research facilities. In some cases, they are now entering COVID-19 patient rooms or mass COVID patient areas to change out the various waste containers. These workers have been trained on the proper precautions and are required to wear appropriate face coverings and other PPE such as gloves. However, should these workers be exposed to COVID-19, they could inadvertently expose patients to it as they travel from one healthcare facility to another. To mitigate this potential risk, we request that specialty waste workers providing services within these healthcare settings be included in any such “Phase 1a” of vaccine distribution in your state as outlined by The National Academies of Sciences – Engineering – Medicine under its “Framework for Equitable Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine.”

The waste and recycling industry provides a critical service essential for society to function. Coronavirus outbreaks in the Baltimore[[1]](#footnote-1) [[2]](#footnote-2) and Philadelphia[[3]](#footnote-3) solid waste workforces have resulted in delayed collection raising the potential for a wider public health crisis that our nation cannot afford to risk.

The solid waste industry directly employs nearly 458,000 people as of late 2020. It is estimated that the private sector waste and recycling industry accounts for over one million jobs. Association members operate in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and can be found in most, if not all, U.S. congressional districts. Waste and recycling facilities number nearly 18,000 scattered throughout the U.S., mirroring population centers.

Thank you for taking the time to review our request. Please contact Kirk Sander at 202-364-3750 or [ksander@wasterecycling.org](mailto:ksander@wasterecycling.org) to discuss this issue or if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

![A close up of a mans face

Description automatically generated]()

Darrell K. Smith, PhD

President and CEO

1. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/coronavirus/bs-md-ci-recycling-service-suspension-20200611-744kmq75rnbrdk4pthetj3lhki-story.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/coronavirus/bs-md-baltimore-looking-to-fill-gaps-in-trash-collections-20200615-hh5i2rieezfwho7nzq4uq2fxfe-story.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://6abc.com/philly-trash-philadelphia-streets-department-covid19/6281913/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)