

The Countywide Mattress Recycling Program

The Los Angeles County Countywide Mattress Recycling Program (MRP) is a sustainable waste management program managed and operated by the Los Angeles County Public Works (Public Works) Environmental Programs Division. Among the many burgeoning sustainability programs within the Los Angeles County (County) Zero Waste Plan, MRP has seen some of the highest levels of productivity growth and community visibility in recent years. With a multi-prong sustainability focus, the program centers its efforts around landfill diversion and recycling of mattresses, box springs, and futon waste, promoting community outreach and awareness of no-cost mattress recycling, and being a community partner in combatting illegal dumping of this material. These no-cost options include free bulky item pick-up services, free retailer take-back, permanent mattress recycling collection centers, free community Mattress Recycling Collection Events (MRP Collection Events), and no-cost commercial mattress recycling and transportation assistance for mattress retailers, hotels, hospitals, hotels, and military bases.

No-Cost Mattress Recycling and Collection

One of County residents' most commonly unknown free mattress collection options is their waste haulers' free bulky item pick-up services. Most residential (i.e., single-family homes/houses) waste haulers offer three to four annual vouchers for free curbside collection of larger-size items (e.g., mattresses and box springs, furniture, appliances, etc.), which can be scheduled directly through the haulers. Residents of multi-family homes (e.g., apartments, condominiums, duplexes, etc.) should contact their community property managers to schedule bulky item pick-up. These are perhaps the most convenient among the no-cost mattress/box spring recycling options available to residents in most areas of the County.

When consumers purchase a new mattress set with delivery, they often have an old mattress or box spring they need to dispose of. Effective January 1, 2021, California requires that all mattress retailers, including online retailers who provide mattress delivery, take back their customers' old mattress set(s), unit-for-unit (e.g., purchase of two mattresses and two box springs would require the retailer to take back two mattresses and two box springs at no additional charge). Residents should check with the retailer to see whether they will accommodate more than a unit-for-unit take-back (e.g., taking back three old mattresses upon delivery of one mattress and one box spring).

Another lesser-known option to County residents is the existence of nearly 20 permanent mattress recycling collection centers located across multiple regions of the County.

Business entities searching for no-cost mattress recycling can explore their options with the Bye Bye Mattress Commercial Volume Program, a program of the Mattress Recycling Council.

Environmental Policy in Waste Management Sustainability

For all of the various options that MRP promotes to County residents for no-cost mattress collection and recycling, there are also significant benefits mattress recycling brings to communities from a public policy perspective in sustainable waste management, notably that of Extended Producer Responsibility. One example exists within MRP's partnership with MRC in hosting community MRP Collection Events. In 2013, California enacted Senate Bill 254, which required the mattress industry to create and establish California's statewide mattress recycling program, which would become MRC. Among the requirements established by Senate Bill 254 was California's \$10.50 point-of-sale surcharge on all new, used, and renovated mattresses, futons, and box springs sold in the state, the proceeds of which fund Bye Bye Mattress, which, among other functions, then partners with and supports local agencies, such as Public Works, in hosting community collection and recycling events.

In partnership with the nonprofit Mattress Recycling Council (MRC), the County Parks and Recreation, and other organizations, MRP hosts multiple free community Mattress Recycling Collection Events (MRP Events) throughout the year, countywide and open to all County residents (business mattress units not accepted). These community events are one of the most popular components of MRP, having seen a significant increase in the number of annual events held over the last six years, from three to four events per year to roughly 25 events per year, the majority of which are in the North County Antelope Valley Region, as part of Public Works' broader and focused efforts to combat illegal dumping in areas where it is most problematic, including more open and rural areas. According to Public Works data, since 2018, these events have collected more than 9,000 mattresses and box springs for recycling, though the number that would have otherwise been illegally dumped is unknown. Projections suggest that the number of recycled units will surpass 10,000 by 2025.

There is also an essential and valuable economic component to mattress recycling. According to MRC, up to 75 percent of this material can be recycled into various consumer goods and products that maximize their product end-of-life recycling potential, including appliances, building materials, renewable fuel, and other products such as carpet padding, oil filters, pet bedding, and more; all of which contribute to existing, new, and emerging circular economies and the job creation.

The County is also an annual program participant in the California Illegally Dumped Mattress Collection Initiative (IDMCI), administered by MRC, which provides financial reimbursement to jurisdictions for documented collection of illegally dumped mattress waste in their communities.

Lastly, MRP continues to center much of its focus on the County's ongoing commitment to combat illegal dumping, the negative impacts of which contribute to, among other things, urban and rural blight, public health risks posed by potential sanitary and hazardous conditions, traffic and pedestrian safety risks, and increased government expenditures for collection of this material.

Moving Forward

In the coming years, the Countywide Mattress Recycling Program plans to continue its success while significantly increasing awareness of the County's multiple no-cost mattress recycling options, emphasizing free bulky item pick-up and free retailer take-back. The program also intends to work closely with the Public Works outreach operations to bring awareness to the many options for mattress recycling, particularly in the effort to reduce illegal dumping and raise awareness of the many economic benefits of this growing sustainable enterprise.

For more information on the County's Mattress Recycling Program, visit <https://cleanla.lacounty.gov/mrp/>.