



Date: October 27, 2023

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager 

From: Eric Lopez, Public Works Director 

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Refuse Collection Update**

In May 2023, due to industry wide staffing shortages, City of Long Beach serviced refuse accounts began experiencing delays and missed service. To address the underlying problem and minimize impacts to service, the City worked collaboratively across departments and with labor partners to develop a critical response plan to retain existing employees, recruit new refuse operators, and provide the necessary onboarding and safety training to ensure success. The collective goal was to be fully staffed within 12 months.

To retain existing employees, all existing refuse operators were evaluated and 34 were promoted. In addition to the retention bonus for all eligible full time City employees, 80 refuse operators received a performance incentive for their hard work over the pandemic and for filling in during the staffing shortage.

A recruitment incentive along with a well-publicized hiring event was utilized to attract candidates and retain new refuse operators. Since May, the City has contacted 70 candidates, held 106 interviews, made 68 offers, and successfully onboarded 53 Refuse Operators.

Streamlined processes and a first of its kind hiring event allowed for quick onboarding of new employees. To maximize safe operation, minimize injuries, educate on equipment, and prepare the employees for the demands of the job, the City has created a weeklong new-employee training program. The program, along with refresher training courses, will continue to be evaluated and improved over time. The final cohort of refuse operators started on October 23rd fully staffing the division with 135 refuse operators, six months ahead of the original goal. This ensures plenty of capacity for time off over the holidays, end of year attrition/ retirements, and staffing the annual Christmas Treecycling efforts. The City will continue to train, promote, and recruit as necessary to facilitate adequate staffing.

The backlog for special collections, cart replacement, and dumped items is at an all time low. We encourage City serviced accounts to [request](#) up to 12 annual special collections for bulky, oversized, and odd shaped items through the website or by calling (562) 570-2876. Dumped items should continue to be reported via the Go Long Beach app.

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If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Josh Hickman, Deputy Director of Public Works (562) 570-2850.

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