

February 1, 2023



Dear Apple Valley community,

My name is Darren and as the CEO of Apple Valley Waste, I want to thank you for choosing us to be your trash and recycling collector. As we roll into a new year, we have spent the greater part of January assessing some recent service challenges, developing new strategies to resolve those in the future, and investing in significant improvements to provide all our customers with better communications and improved service!

Recently, some of our customers experienced circumstances that are not consistent with our service standards. Admittedly, the Waste Industry across the country has had increased challenges this past year related to labor shortages, rising fuel costs and most recently, weather events.

You deserve answers and we have them! It is my responsibility to take the lead and be the first to say, "I'm sorry" that many of you experienced delays in your trash service and even more so, that this happened over the holidays. I offer the following, not as an excuse, but rather an explanation in hopes that you see why some things beyond our control created the situation and the challenges of solving it.

When weather events make it unsafe or impossible for our trucks and team to pick up on normal schedules, trash companies can usually just "slide the day" (*pick up Monday's customers on Tuesday and then ultimately Friday's on Saturday*). At Apple Valley, we always err on the side of safety for our employees and the public and make the decision to not operate if we feel it's unsafe to do so. With the December event, we saw rain and then a quick significant drop in temperatures on Thursday 12/22 and then a snow event on Friday 12/23 – both of these days were impacted and had limited operations.

But on top of that, an even bigger factor occurred with holidays on back-to-back weekends (*with Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve 2022*) where the "slide approach" mentioned above didn't work because the locations where we dispose of your trash (landfills/transfer station) were closed. Additionally, we are not permitted to store trash at our facility and even if we could legally, keeping that trash on our trucks is a huge fire risk, and would still make it impossible to service all of Monday's customers due to the trucks being loaded from the previous week!

So, in this recent scenario, the only option was to slide a whole week, which resulted in twice as much trash pick-up, which just didn't fit on our trucks. So what did we do to correct this? We rallied our forces and brought in drivers from as far as our New Jersey sister companies so we could fix the holiday/weather problem faster without violating commercial driver rules about hour limitations. It did take some time, but we eventually did catch all routes up and are back operating on schedule.

Unfortunately, in addition to getting behind in some areas with trash pickup, our call center was flooded with additional calls and many of you were forced to stay on the phone for far too long to let us know. I am sorry about that too. We have an amazing team at our call center and because they care so much about each customer, some calls lasted longer than average in an attempt to resolve issues.

In an effort to improve our communications, at the end of the year we expanded our team and invested heavily in new software to help better run our contact centers. We are still in the process of empowering staff members with the training and new processes needed to ensure you have a better experience when you try to reach us by phone.

We should have done a better job at communicating the challenges that we were facing and steps being taken to resolve them to keep you in the loop of what was going on. Another step we have taken is to hire a professional outside communications team to help keep our customers and the community informed of important updates or changes as relates to your service. Follow us on Facebook to get the most recent updates on our service.

And finally, because we value our Apple Valley customers, we have opened the door to hear from you and allow you to share your comments with us directly. There is a link below you can use to provide comments, suggestions and ask questions. You will also have an opportunity to provide your preferred method of communication for future notices and information that we will be sharing on a more consistent basis.

Thank you for your time in reading this letter. And thank you for your patience as we work together as a team to provide the kind of service you deserve!

Sincerely,

Darren Gruendel, CEO,  
Apple Valley Waste



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HERE!**