

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## In Defiant Stance, Waste Management To Move Forward With Tipping Fees Implementation

VIC News / **Published On August 01, 2017 01:08 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **August 01, 2017**



ST. CROIX -- Even after the owners of waste hauling companies gathered at the Senate building in Frederiksted on Friday voicing their concerns about what was described as exorbitant tipping fees set to take effect today, and made a collective decision not to pickup the waste of businesses or jobs for private citizens who require bins, Waste Management Authority told The Consortium Monday night that it would move forward with the implementation of the fees -- which average about \$52 per ton -- stating that they were already approved by the Public Services Commission (PSC).

"The fees were initially approved by the PSC April, 2016 and the PSC approved the use of volume-based methodology in June 2017," said Alice Krall, W.M.A.'s communications

director. Asked who had recommended to the PSC the new structure, Ms. Krall ducked the question and instead reiterated what she'd already said, while pointing to other jurisdictions with similar methodologies. "The fees were approved in April 2016 and the pricing is significantly lower than similar islands," she said, adding that the island Kauai charges \$119 per ton, while Guam charges \$172 per ton.

The PSC relies on its clients, including WMA, to propose changes and fees to their operations.

Significantly, Ms. Kralls said the tipping fees will in no way affect residents, whether they are disposing of regularly collected waste, or trash from private work done in their yards needing a bin. The caveat, however, is that residents would have to carry the waste to the landfill themselves. If residents choose to hire a hauler, the haulers would simply pass on the cost to customers.

Waste haulers will be hosting an important meeting at 10:00 a.m. today at the W.M.A. offices in Williams Delight. The Consortium is set to attend.

[View the original embedded media](#)

The owners of Bates Trucking, Just Right Trucking, Atlantic Trucking, VI regulated Waste Management, Paradise Waste, Dan's Trucking and Marco Trucking were all at the Senate building on Friday protesting the new fees. Waste haulers say the new rates will gravely damage their operations, with one owner describing the move as "business-ending."

"Number one, the tipping fees are really high out the sky," said James Bates, owner of Bates Trucking. He explained that a 20-yard bin, which is the equivalent of 20 tons, increases a customer's charge from having only to pay the waste hauler, to now include Waste Management as well. At 20 tons, the payment to W.M.A. would be \$1020 — well over what it would cost for simply paying the waste hauler to dispose of the garbage.

W.M.A. says the tipping fee per ton ranges from \$31.28 to \$65.26 depending on the type of material being disposed.

"We gone from them not charging us anything to a thousand and change for one bin," Mr. Bates complained. "I just cleaned a property for a young lady, the cost for me was \$1340. One of her bins came in at 22," Mr. Bates said. At that weight, the tipping fee for one of the customer's three bins would be \$1144. If the three bins weighed about the same, the tipping fee cost would be \$3432. "These expensive tipping fees that they're coming with is going to cripple this economy," Mr. Bates said.

Mr. Bates was not alone in his frustration. All the business owners gathered at the legislative building were irate. They had just left the office of Senator Kurt Vialet seeking help, and wanted to get their message out to the public. At the gathering, they called on W.M.A. to delay the fees until a more reasonable solution could be negotiated.

While the new fees dominated the impromptu press conference, the manner in which W.M.A. intends to collect the money also angered the waste haulers. Instead of creating a system whereby W.M.A. collects the fees directly from customers, the government agency is depending on the waste haulers to collect the fees from the customers, and

then pass on the payment to W.M.A. Even worse, the waste haulers must first collect the waste from the customer, charge their regular price, take the waste to a W.M.A. scale, find out the weight and then communicate with the customer the tipping fee charge.

There's also the problem of effectively communicating the changes to customers. Residents have been baffled after learning of the new charges, with businesses and private residents with major waste to dispose of, set to feel the burden.

"Just to give you an example of what's happening. One customer of mine that's not paying any tipping fee right now, he is going to be saddled with one tipping fee bill of \$3,800 a month. That's a major impact on any business. That's a grocery store, so if a loaf of bread is what it is now, it's going to be more, a lot more," said Lloyd Daniel, owner of Dan's Trucking.

The waste haulers spoke of a potential spike in illegal waste dumping if the tipping fees are allowed to take effect. "The community will be dirtier and there will be no control for managing the solid waste in the Virgin Islands," said Marcia Richards from VI Regulated Waste Management, adding that the cleanup would then become more costly for W.M.A.

Waste Management delayed the tipping fees last year after coming under pressure from lawmakers and residents alike who decried the new fees as too sudden and even too costly. Senator Novelle Francis and former Senator Kenneth Gittens had spoken openly about the matter, and Mr. Francis had proposed legislation calling for a delay in implementation.

But W.M.A. based its decision back then to delay the tipping fees on "ongoing improvements at the three receiving solid waste disposal facilities," and not necessarily pressure from the public and lawmakers. Mr. Daniel said while there were meetings last October with W.M.A., nothing conclusive relative to finding a fair balance came out of those meetings.

The waste haulers are asking for a flat rate similar to that of St. Thomas, whose waste haulers are currently allowed to include a flat fee in their charge, because according to W.M.A., there is currently no scale in St. Thomas to weigh the garbage.

"If we just get a flat rate where we could say it's \$50 more to empty the bin, we'll just put it in our price and business goes on again. Waste Management probably has problems trying to collect money, but the way how they're coming with it right now, it's going to be very hard on us and very confusing. So Tuesday come, we can't pickup no private Trash," Mr. Bates concluded.