

Resource recovery sorter Job Description

A free job description template for the Waste management industry

Company Name: _____

Location: _____

Employment Type: _____

Reports To: _____

Date: _____

DISCLAIMER

This resource recovery sorter job description template reflects Australian workplace standards and waste industry practice at the time of publication. It is a general guide only and does not constitute legal advice. Confirm the applicable classification, licence requirements and pay rate against the Waste Management Award 2020 (MA000043) and the actual duties of the role before advertising. For complex coverage questions, seek independent legal or HR advice.

1. Position overview

A resource recovery sorter works the picking line at a materials recovery facility, separating mixed material into clean streams and pulling out contamination before it reaches the baler. The output quality decides whether the facility can sell the material or has to pay to dispose of it.

The work is repetitive, fast and done standing beside a moving conveyor, so pace and concentration matter more than experience. Under the Waste Management Award sorters sit at Level 2 as process workers.

2. Key responsibilities

Sort material on the picking line

Separate paper, cardboard, plastics, glass and metals into the correct chutes at line speed.

Remove contamination

Pull out material that would downgrade or reject an outgoing bale.

Identify and isolate hazardous items

Remove gas cylinders, batteries and sharps safely and report them rather than letting them pass.

Meet quality and throughput targets

Work to the facility's contamination thresholds so outgoing material meets its specification.

Keep the work area clear

Clear spillage from around the line and chutes so the area stays safe and the plant keeps running.

Report plant issues promptly

Flag jams, belt damage and chute blockages before they become a stoppage.

3. Skills and attributes

- Rapid visual identification: Distinguishes material types quickly and correctly at line speed.
- Sustained pace: Maintains accuracy over a full shift on a moving line.
- Safety around plant: Understands guarding, isolation and never reaching into a running conveyor.
- Physical stamina: Comfortable standing and reaching repetitively for extended periods.
- Quality focus: Understands that a contaminated bale costs the facility money.
- Line teamwork: Coordinates with sorters either side so the whole line keeps up.

4. Qualifications and requirements

Requirements for resource recovery sorter positions vary by operator and vehicle class. These are the credentials Australian waste employers ask for most often.

- No formal qualification required — Not required. Sorters are trained on the job in material identification and line procedures.
- Plant safety induction — Provided. Covers conveyor safety, isolation, emergency stops and PPE.
- Manual handling training — Provided. Delivered at induction and refreshed periodically.
- Hazardous material awareness — Desirable. Useful for recognising batteries, gas cylinders and sharps on the line.
- Certificate II in Resource Recovery — Desirable. Supports progression to plant operator or line supervisor.
- Forklift licence (LF) — Desirable. Useful for moving finished bales in the yard.

5. Working conditions

- Indoor plant environment with significant noise, dust and odour
- Standing at a moving conveyor for most of the shift
- Repetitive reaching, sorting and lifting
- Mandatory PPE including gloves, eye protection and hearing protection
- Shift work, including afternoon and night shifts at facilities running extended hours
- Exposure to sharps and hazardous items entering on the line

6. Award information

Waste Management Award 2020 (MA000043)

Most resource recovery sorter positions in Australia are covered by the Waste Management Award 2020 (MA000043). This role generally sits at Level 2, which pays \$1,168.48 a week or \$30.75 an hour for full-time and part-time employees, and \$38.44 an hour for casuals, from 1 July 2026. See the full Waste Management Award pay guide for every classification, penalty rate and allowance.

The rates include the industry allowance

Fair Work publishes these rates with the \$3.24 per hour industry allowance already included, because clause 16.2(b) makes it an all-purpose allowance — payable for all purposes including overtime and shift rates. Rate sites that strip it out quote a Level 1 rate around \$26.63 instead of \$30.11, and every penalty calculated from that lower base is understated.

7. Frequently asked questions

About the role

Q: What does a resource recovery sorter do?

A resource recovery sorter works a picking line at a materials recovery facility, separating mixed material into clean streams, removing contamination before it reaches the baler, and isolating hazardous items such as batteries and gas cylinders.

Q: Is sorting on a picking line dangerous?

It carries real risks, which is why plant safety induction is mandatory. The main hazards are the moving conveyor itself, sharps entering on the line, and hazardous items such as gas cylinders and lithium batteries. PPE and isolation procedures are not optional.

Q: What award level is a resource recovery sorter?

Level 2 under the Waste Management Award, which covers process workers alongside labourers and waste facility attendants.

Q: Do sorters work shifts?

Often. Facilities running extended hours roster afternoon and night shifts, which attract shift loadings under the award — 117.5% for afternoon shift and 130% for night shift, defined by when the shift finishes rather than when it starts.

Pay and award

Q: How much does a resource recovery sorter earn in Australia?

Under the Waste Management Award 2020, a resource recovery sorter at Level 2 earns a minimum of \$1,168.48 a week or \$30.75 an hour as a full-time or part-time employee, and \$38.44 an hour as a casual, from 1 July 2026. These are legal minimums — many operators pay above them, and penalties apply for weekend, shift and overtime work.

Q: Do early starts attract a penalty rate?

Not inside the ordinary-hours span. The award opens ordinary hours at 4.00am, so a pre-dawn start is ordinary time at 100%. Paying a penalty for every early start is the most common overpayment in waste payroll. See the award guide for the full span.

Q: What are the weekend and public holiday rates?

Saturday is 150% for the first two hours then 200%, Sunday is 200%, and a public holiday is 250% — with Good Friday and Christmas Day higher again at 300%. Casual rates add 25 percentage points to each, except overtime, which adds 10.

Q: What is the minimum shift length?

Four hours. Casual employees have a minimum daily engagement of 4 hours and part-time employees must be paid a minimum of 4 hours for each day worked.

Hiring and rostering

Q: How do I write a resource recovery sorter job ad?

Start from this template, then add the specific vehicle class, site and start time. Candidates for waste roles self-select strongly on start time and equipment, so being vague costs you good applicants. Our guide to writing a job description covers the structure.

Q: How do I keep licences current across a crew?

Store each licence and endorsement against the employee with its expiry date and get warned in advance — see licence and certification management. Rostering someone onto a task they are no longer certified for is the employer's exposure.

Q: How do I roster around early starts fairly?

Publish rosters with enough notice, rotate the earliest starts across the crew, and track actual versus rostered hours so the load is visible. Our guide to rostering waste collection staff walks through it.

Q: Can RosterElf track depot clock-ins?

Yes. GPS geofences around each depot or transfer station record where and when a shift actually started against what was rostered — the comparison an early-start or overtime question turns on months later.