

Waste collection driver

Job Description

A free job description template for the Waste management industry

Company Name: _____

Location: _____

Employment Type: _____

Reports To: _____

Date: _____

DISCLAIMER

This waste collection driver 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 waste collection driver runs a fixed kerbside route on a set day, in a vehicle that is usually a rear-loading, side-lift or skip-lift truck. The work starts early — the Waste Management Award opens ordinary hours at 4.00am precisely because collection has to be finished before traffic builds.

The role is more than driving. Drivers complete pre-start vehicle checks, watch for contamination and hazardous items in bins, manage the truck around parked cars and pedestrians, and weigh in at a transfer station or landfill at the end of the run. A missed street is a service failure that a council or commercial client hears about the same morning.

2. Key responsibilities

Complete the assigned collection route

Work a fixed kerbside or commercial route to the published schedule, covering general waste, recycling and green waste streams as rostered.

Carry out pre-start and post-trip vehicle checks

Inspect brakes, lights, hydraulics, tyres and the lifting mechanism before departure, and report defects before the vehicle leaves the depot.

Operate the lifting and compaction equipment safely

Use side-lift arms, rear-loader packers or skip-lift gear in line with the manufacturer instructions and the site safe work method statement.

Identify contamination and hazardous items

Recognise material that does not belong in the stream, tag or leave the bin as procedure requires, and report hazardous items rather than loading them.

Weigh in and dispose at the correct facility

Present at the weighbridge, record the load against the correct customer or stream, and tip only at the facility licensed for that material.

Work safely around the public

Manage the vehicle in residential streets with parked cars, pedestrians and children, and follow reversing and spotter procedures.

3. Skills and attributes

- Heavy vehicle handling: Confident manoeuvring a heavy rigid vehicle in narrow residential streets and tight commercial yards.
- Reliability at early starts: Consistently on time for a pre-dawn start, because the route cannot begin without the driver.

- Hazard awareness: Spots contamination, overloaded bins and obstructions before they become an incident.
- Safety discipline: Follows pre-start checks and reversing procedures every time, not only when supervised.
- Public-facing conduct: Deals calmly with residents and business customers while working to a tight schedule.
- Basic mechanical awareness: Recognises when a hydraulic or brake fault means the vehicle should not leave the depot.

4. Qualifications and requirements

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

- Heavy Rigid (HR) licence (required) — A current HR licence is the standard requirement for side-lift and rear-loader collection vehicles. Some fleets require HC for larger configurations.
- Current driver history check (required) — Most operators check the driving record before offering a collection role.
- Pre-employment medical and drug screen — Commonly required. Standard for heavy vehicle roles, including fatigue and fitness-for-duty assessment.
- Waste industry induction — Provided. Site and route induction covering the depot, disposal facilities and stream-specific procedures.
- Certificate II or III in Waste Management — Desirable. Not required to start — many drivers train on the job — but useful for progression to larger vehicle classes.
- First aid certificate — Desirable. Valued on crews working away from the depot for most of the shift.

5. Working conditions

- Early starts — the award opens ordinary hours at 4.00am, and most runs begin before dawn
- Outdoor work in all weather, with frequent cab entry and exit
- Exposure to odour, dust and noise, with PPE provided
- Physically demanding, including manual handling of bins that have not presented correctly
- Weekend and public holiday work on some commercial and event runs
- Fatigue management obligations under heavy vehicle law

6. Award information

Waste Management Award 2020 (MA000043)

Most waste collection driver positions in Australia are covered by the Waste Management Award 2020 (MA000043). This role generally sits at Level 5, which pays \$1,212.58 a week or \$31.91 an hour for full-time and part-time employees, and \$39.89 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 waste collection driver do?

A waste collection driver operates a rear-loading, side-lift or skip-lift truck along a fixed route, collecting general waste, recycling or green waste and disposing of it at a licensed facility. The role includes pre-start vehicle checks, identifying contamination, and weighing in at a transfer station or landfill.

Q: What licence does a waste collection driver need?

A Heavy Rigid (HR) licence is the standard requirement for side-lift and rear-loading collection vehicles. Some operators require a Heavy Combination (HC) licence for larger configurations, and skip and hook-lift work may need additional endorsements.

Q: Do waste collection drivers start early?

Almost always. The Waste Management Award opens ordinary hours at 4.00am, which is unusually early and reflects how kerbside collection actually runs. An early start inside that span is ordinary time, not overtime.

Q: Is waste collection driving physically demanding?

Yes. Even on a fully automated side-lift run, drivers get in and out of the cab repeatedly, reposition bins that have not presented correctly, and work in heat, rain and cold. Rear-loader crews handle bins manually throughout the shift.

Pay and award

Q: How much does a waste collection driver earn in Australia?

Under the Waste Management Award 2020, a waste collection driver at Level 5 earns a minimum of \$1,212.58 a week or \$31.91 an hour as a full-time or part-time employee, and \$39.89 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 waste collection driver 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.