



News

Philadelphia, PA - MSNBC: Philadelphia likes solar-powered 'BigBelly'

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City finds it can stuff more trash with compactors, saving money

Is it any surprise that a city known for its love of cheesesteaks, soft pretzels and cannolis would embrace a solar-powered trash compactor called a BigBelly?

In the largest rollout yet, Philadelphia has replaced 700 downtown trash bins with 500 of the high-tech compactors, which use solar energy to condense trash — cutting down collection trips by 75 percent.

Facing a \$1.4 billion, five-year budget deficit, the city estimates it will save \$875,000 a year with the compactors, bought with state grant money. Cities from Vienna to Boston to Vancouver have tried the devices in smaller numbers, but Philadelphia put them along four collection routes in its heavily traveled downtown area.

Streets Commissioner Clarena Tolson said the compactors, the last of which was installed this month, usually need to be emptied five times a week — as opposed to 19 times for a regular can. The change frees up 25 streets department employees, who are now filling vacancies on trucks that collect household recycling. ...

'We're full' alerts

In Philadelphia, the cans also have a wireless monitoring system that notifies the city when they're full. In addition, the city is introducing curbside recycling containers next to many of the compactors. ...

But Philadelphia is the first to use them in such big numbers, along whole collection routes. ...



The targeted approach is also being tested in Somerville, Mass., where officials have focused them in densely packed areas.

Somerville has saturated its main square and several other areas, freeing up several streets department workers to repair potholes, trim trees and fix playground equipment, said Michael Lambert, director of transportation and infrastructure. ...

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