

# STR clamps down on types of garbage cans

By Kathryn Reed

Garbage removal on the South Shore isn't like a lot of other places. Depending on the customer this is a good or bad thing.

This fall South Tahoe Refuse sent postcards to people saying, "Do not purchase totes." These are the receptacles that have handles that attach to a garbage truck and are then mechanically lifted and emptied.

STR doesn't have these types of trucks. Instead, human power is used to lift the can into the truck.



A South Tahoe Refuse customer is miffed about the company's policy on tote cans and even more perturbed his can is knocked over after being emptied.

Photo/Provided

"They are high strength molded plastic designed specifically to be used with hydraulic systems," John Marchini with South Tahoe Refuse told *Lake Tahoe News* of the totes. "Our biggest concern is that we do not want to subject our coworkers to

lift these totes.”

The totes are usually larger because jurisdictions that allow them don't have workers lifting them, plus customers are often limited to one can, though usually there are separate recycling and yard waste cans.

“Lifting sometimes heavy trash containers is a job description, not a basis for a campaign to downgrade the town's trash containers,” one customer told *Lake Tahoe News*.

“What sticks in my craw is that this thing is a monopoly, that trash pick up is mandatory and that I'd like to see the town cleaned up and standardized trash containers with attached lids would go a long way. So it is especially annoying when I do more than my part and buy a nice wheeled container, like every other civilized town, and they actually try to forbid me from doing something so simple,” a 24-year resident told *Lake Tahoe News*. He is feeling put upon by STR, his tote trash can knocked over after it's emptied and denied blue recycling bags, so he doesn't want his name used for fear of serious retribution.

STR says it has come up with a compromise for people who want to use the tote cans. If garbage is in bags that can be lifted out and thrown into the truck, the garbagemen will service that container.

Totes, though, are not the typical 32- or 45-gallon can. Like other cans, some are designed to be animal resistant.

In general, cans should not be more than 50 pounds, and bags no more than 30 pounds.

The South Lake Tahoe-base company has no intention of changing its vehicles to accommodate the totes that are so widely used every place else. One reason is more jurisdictions are requiring bear boxes. Totes don't fit in bear boxes.

El Dorado County requires anyone building a new home or doing a remodel to put in a bear box.

If STR were to go to hydraulic trucks that could lift totes, the bear box issue would require some sort of hybrid system. And company officials say one day that is possible.

The thinking behind sending the postcard was also to let commercial customers know totes are not acceptable.