



IMPORTANT

SERVICE BULLETIN

Preventive Maintenance & Readiness Notice

PRIORITY 2 OF 3 · ACTION RECOMMENDED

BODY CHECKS BEFORE THANKSGIVING

REF RDK-SB-2026-09-16 · 9-16-2026

INTERVALS SHOWN ARE GUIDELINES — YOUR BODY
MANUFACTURER'S MANUAL GOVERNS

RDK TRUCK SALES · TAMPA, FLORIDA · EST. 1997

HOLIDAY TRASH IS COMING — GET YOUR REFUSE BODIES READY BEFORE IT HITS

Household waste jumps about 25 percent from Thanksgiving through New Year's. Your packer, hydraulics, tailgate, and arm carry that load. Get them checked now, not in December.

BULLETIN NO.	RDK-SB-2026-09-16	ISSUE DATE	September 16, 2026
CLASSIFICATION	IMPORTANT — action recommended	SUPERSEDES	None
APPLIES TO	All customer, fleet, municipal, and rental refuse units — rear loaders, automated and manual side loaders, front loaders, roll-off hoists, and grapple bodies	STATUS	Active
BODIES COVERED	Heil · McNeilus · New Way · Labrie · Loadmaster · Amrep · Petersen · Galbreath · Galfab · Pac-Mac · Pac-Tech hoists · other packer and hoist bodies	PREP WINDOW	September 16 – November 20, 2026
ISSUED BY	RDK Truck Sales — Service Department, Tampa, Florida	AUTHOR	Richard Kemner, Founder

1.0 PURPOSE

To notify RDK customers, fleet managers, and municipal solid waste departments that the heaviest collection weeks of the year begin the Monday after Thanksgiving, and that the refuse **body** — not the chassis — is the component most likely to take a truck off the route during that surge. This bulletin lays out what the holiday load does to a packer body, the inspection every unit should get before Thanksgiving, the daily habits that keep it running through January, and the parts worth having on the shelf before you need them.

2.0 WHAT THE HOLIDAYS DO TO YOUR TRUCKS

EPA has long estimated that the volume of household waste in the United States increases about **25 percent between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day** — roughly **1 million extra tons**, or a rise from about 4 million tons to 5 million tons in that window.^{1,2} Republic Services puts the same number at about **1,000 extra pounds of garbage per household** for the season.⁵

+25%

more household waste between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day¹

1M tons

extra material in the national waste stream over that six-week window¹

1,000 lb

extra garbage per household for the season, per Republic Services⁵

800–1,200

hydraulic cycles a refuse body runs on a typical route — before the surge¹⁰

Volume is only half of it. The material changes. Wrapping paper, boxes, and foam packaging are **light-weight, high-volume** materials that fill a truck much faster than ordinary household garbage, which can force extra trips to

the transfer station or landfill.⁴ Recology reports that **December and January are its busiest months**, with co-mingled recycling volume up roughly 15 percent and a steady rise in small and medium boxes from online shopping.³ Heil's own operator's manual makes the mechanical point: dry bulk cardboard, foam, and loose plastic **"cannot be compressed and packed as effectively as wet, soft, garbage type materials."**⁸ That means more packer cycles per ton, more pressure spikes, and more heat in the hydraulic system.

Locally: no make-up days means double loads.

Hillsborough County runs no collection on Thanksgiving Day (Thursday, November 26), Christmas Day (Friday, December 25), or New Year's Day (Friday, January 1). There are **no holiday make-up days** — service resumes on the next regularly scheduled collection day, so those routes pick up two collections' worth of material in one pass.⁶ County disposal facilities also close early on December 24, and Christmas trees go out curbside on regular yard-waste days after the holiday.^{6, 7} Check your own county's schedule, but expect the same pattern across Florida.

3.0 WHY THE BODY FAILS FIRST

A refuse body cycles its hydraulic system 800 to 1,200 times per route at 2,500 to 3,500 psi, running four to six circuits — packer, tailgate, lift arms, hoist — and every cycle generates heat, creates wear, and stresses seals.¹⁰ Add 25 percent more material that packs poorly and the cycle count climbs with it.

Florida makes it worse. Heat and coastal corrosion **"accelerate wiring degradation and hydraulic seal wear faster than OEM calendar intervals assume,"** which is why Florida-based service providers publish shorter field intervals than the manufacturer's book.¹²

COMMON HOLIDAY-SEASON FAILURE	WHAT IT DOES TO THE ROUTE	TYPICAL TIME OFF THE ROAD
Hydraulic hose failure (rear loader)	Route aborted mid-shift	1 to 2 days ¹²
Lift arm cylinder leak (side / front loader)	Commercial or cart stops skipped	2 to 4 days ¹²
Contaminated hydraulic fluid	Sluggish, erratic packer and arm; the "#1 cause of arm precision failure" on automated side loaders	Accelerates pump, valve, and cylinder wear until a larger failure ^{11, 13}
Worn packer blade, wear shoes, or guide rails	Lost compaction, jamming events that stop the route, compactor damage	Varies — a jam is hours; a damaged compactor is days ^{11, 12}
Worn gripper pads, pins, bushings (ASL)	Dropped carts, missed lifts, arm alignment errors	Cascades into other arm component failures if not caught ¹¹

Contamination is the quiet one.

One hydraulic cylinder manufacturer estimates that **about three-quarters of ingested contamination enters through the packer cylinders**. When a driver dumps a can behind the blade, trash sits on cylinders running at 150 to 160 degrees, bakes on, and gets pulled past the wiper seal on the next stroke. The particles then circulate "like little pieces of sandpaper" through the pump, valves, and lines.¹³ A cylinder rated to compact 10,000 pounds can quietly drop to 7,500 pounds as the bore scores and pressure bypasses the piston.¹³

Hydraulic hose failures alone account for **up to half of all hydraulic system downtime** on heavy equipment, and a hose that fails at the transfer station with a full load means hours of delay while a backup truck scrambles.^{10, 14} One Florida service provider puts unplanned refuse-truck downtime at **\$500 to \$1,200 per hour** once driver wages, missed disposal windows, overtime, and contract penalties are counted.¹²

4.0 THE PRE-HOLIDAY BODY INSPECTION

Run every unit through this inspection between now and mid-November. Do it with the engine off and hydraulic pressure relieved for the hands-on items, and never check for leaks with your hands — hold a piece of cardboard an inch or two from the suspected area.¹⁴ Items marked **OEM** are drawn from Heil's published daily checklists and apply equally to other makes.⁸

4.1 Hydraulic fluid, tank, and filters

- ☐ Pull a fluid sample. Milky or cloudy fluid means water; dark, metallic-smelling fluid means metal particles. Either one says stop and find the source.¹⁰
- ☐ Change all hydraulic filters — return line, suction, and in-line — and check the reservoir breather cap for blockage.¹⁵
- ☐ Verify reservoir level after a full cycle, not before. Tank must be full to the manufacturer's mark. **OEM**^{8, 15}
- ☐ Match the fluid exactly. If the body calls for AW-46, use AW-46; if AW-68, use AW-68. Mixed viscosities or brands foam, overheat, and wear the system faster.¹⁵
- ☐ If the unit is at or near its full fluid change interval — most manufacturers say 2,000 to 4,000 operating hours — do the change now rather than in January.¹⁵

4.2 Hoses and fittings

- ☐ Inspect every hose for wet spots, drips, bulges, blisters, exposed wire braid, kinks, crusty or cracked covers, and rubbing against the frame or other hoses.¹⁴
- ☐ Check all fittings for corrosion, cracked crimp collars, movement between hose and fitting, and weeping at the crimp.¹⁴
- ☐ Flex each hose by hand with pressure relieved. A healthy hose is supple; one that feels stiff or crunchy is due for replacement.¹⁴
- ☐ Replace at the first sign of outer-cover damage — do not wait for a blowout — and replace any hose older than three years regardless of appearance. Add protective sleeving at high-friction routing points.¹⁰
- ☐ Confirm clamps and protective sleeves are present; a missing clamp is where the next chafe failure starts.¹⁴

4.3 Cylinders — packer, tailgate, arm, hoist

- ☐ Inspect every cylinder rod for scoring and pitting and look for weeping seals; address a seal before the rod surface is damaged.^{10, 15}

- ☐ Check cylinder alignment on the packer and hoist; misalignment side-loads the rod and the seal.¹⁰
- ☐ Clear all trash and debris from the packer cylinders and from behind the blade — this is the primary contamination entry point.¹³
- ☐ Rebuild cylinders on schedule rather than waiting for a visible external leak; internal bypass shows up as weak compaction long before it drips.^{10, 15}

4.4 Pump, PTO, and relief valve

- ☐ Run the full system under load and listen for pump whine, cavitation, or noise; watch for slow or jerky movement and new vibration.¹⁵
- ☐ A system that works fine empty but struggles under load points to a worn pump, a mis-set relief valve, or internal cylinder bypass.¹⁵
- ☐ Verify relief valve settings to spec. **Do not** raise the relief to compensate for a low-flow pump — that accelerates the failure and destroys the replacement pump too.¹⁰
- ☐ Confirm PTO engagement and check for oil pooling under the truck at the pump.¹⁰

4.5 Packer, hopper, and body structure

- ☐ Measure packer blade and wear shoe wear and inspect guide rails; on high-tonnage routes this is a 90-day item, not a six-month item.^{11, 12}
- ☐ Inspect the hopper and body for damage, cracked welds, cracked metal, and loose or missing nuts and bolts. **OEM**⁸
- ☐ Inspect body mounting brackets for cracked welds, missing bolts or nuts, or movement. **OEM**⁸
- ☐ Inspect ejector or push-out panel seals, ejection cylinder rods, and locking pins on full-eject bodies; a mid-dump failure can damage the tipping floor as well as the truck.¹¹
- ☐ Remove any refuse on or around the engine and exhaust components to prevent a fire, and check undercoating and decals. **OEM**⁸

4.6 Tailgate

- ☐ Inspect the tailgate seal for tears, flattening, and gaps — leaking liquid on a holiday route is a complaint and a slip hazard.
- ☐ Confirm tailgate locks — clamps, turnbuckles, or lock cylinders — fully lock and fully release, and that the tailgate-open light and alarm work; Heil's checklist calls for confirming the tailgate is locked before travel.⁸
- ☐ Verify both tailgate support props are present, undamaged, and their decals readable. Heil requires both props any time the tailgate is open for service.⁹
- ☐ Check tailgate hinge pins and bushings for play.

4.7 Automated side loader arm and cameras

- ☐ Inspect gripper pads, pins, and bushings — they take 800 to 1,000 lifts a day and are a monthly wear item.¹¹
- ☐ Service arm cylinders (seals, rod condition, fluid cleanliness) at the 250 to 500 hour interval; Heil Rapid Rail and McNeilus AutoReach both call for fluid sampling at each service.¹¹
- ☐ Check the slew or rotation bearing for arm drift on articulating and zero-radius arms — a six-month item and a leading cause of cart misses.¹¹

- ☐ Clean and align arm cameras; dirty or misaligned cameras cause positioning errors and near-misses.¹¹

4.8 Front loader arms and forks · roll-off hoists

- ☐ Front loaders: inspect arm and fork pins and bushings for play, fork tips for wear and cracks, top door hinges and cylinder, and arm cylinder seals; check hydraulic filter service against the 500-hour or 1,000-cycle interval.¹²
- ☐ Roll-off hoists: inspect cable or reeving cylinder, hook, sheaves, and rollers for wear and fraying; check hoist cylinder alignment and container locks; clear and inspect the hoist assembly after each route.¹⁰
- ☐ Tarp systems: check arms, motor, and tarp for tears before the season — loose light material blowing off a loaded box is a fine and a complaint.

4.9 Lights, electrical, and safety systems

- ☐ Test all body lights, strobes, and camera systems. Routes start and end in the dark in December; coastal harness corrosion is a six-month check item in Florida.¹²
- ☐ Test packer interlocks, riding-step interlocks, back-up alarm, and e-stops. Inspect all safety decals for damage and readability. **OEM**⁸
- ☐ Cycle every hydraulic circuit at start-up each morning to confirm each one is operating before leaving the yard.⁸

5.0 DAILY HABITS THAT CARRY YOU THROUGH JANUARY

The inspection gets the body ready. These operator habits keep it that way through the surge.

- 1. Cycle it before you leave the yard.** Heil's instruction is a visual check at the start of every shift, then several cycles to find leaks, broken or missing parts, and excessively worn components including hoses.⁸
- 2. Clear behind the blade every day.** Three-quarters of hydraulic contamination comes in over the packer cylinders. Do not dump behind the blade, and clean out behind it at the end of every route.¹³
- 3. Never leave trash on the truck overnight.** It is the first rule of refuse maintenance at RDK — it cooks on the cylinders, corrodes the floor, and gets you a fire on a hot exhaust.^{8, 16}
- 4. Wipe the cylinder rods and look for an oil film** before each shift; a film on the rod is a seal telling you it is on its way out.¹⁰
- 5. Check the reservoir level and look under the truck** for pooling before every shift.¹⁰
- 6. Mix wet and dry.** If the route allows, mix wet bins in with the dry cardboard and packaging loads. Wet material compacts the dry material and lubricates the body, which means fewer cycles per ton.⁸
- 7. Report weeping, drift, or slow cycles the same day.** A hose that is weeping in the morning is the hose that lets go at the transfer station with a full load.¹⁰

6.0 INTERVALS — THE BOOK VERSUS FLORIDA

These are the intervals a Florida refuse-fleet service provider publishes for heavy urban routes, set against the OEM book. Use them as a planning guide; your body manufacturer's manual and your own oil sample results govern.¹²

ITEM	OEM BOOK	FIELD-TESTED, HEAVY FLORIDA ROUTES	RISK OF STRETCHING IT
Hydraulic fluid and filter	500 hours	400 hours	Seal failure, cavitation ¹²
Packer blade and wear shoes	6 months	90 days on high-tonnage routes	Compactor damage ¹²
Electrical harness check	12 months	6 months in coastal climate	Cascading wiring faults ¹²
ASL arm pivot and cylinder seals	—	Every 250 hours of arm operation	Arm drift, dropped carts ^{11, 12}
Hydraulic fluid analysis (rear loader)	—	Every 500 hours; sample at every service event	Undetected water or metal ^{12, 13}
Hydraulic hoses	Replace per spec, typically 3 to 5 years	Severe duty (refuse, recycling): annually; replace anything over 3 years regardless ^{10, 14}	Blowout mid-route
Full hydraulic fluid change	2,000 to 4,000 operating hours	Do it before the season if you are near the interval	Foaming, overheating, wear ¹⁵

One Oregon hauler that moved to six service visits a year with an oil sample at every visit reports it roughly doubled the two-to-four-year life it had been getting from hydraulic components.¹³

7.0 TIMING — WORK BACKWARD FROM THANKSGIVING

WINDOW	WHAT TO HAVE DONE
Now – October 16	Walk every body against Section 4.0. Pull fluid samples. Build the parts list from what you find and order long-lead items (cylinders, wear shoes, gripper assemblies, arm components).
October 19 – November 13	Complete repairs and scheduled services. Stagger PMs across rear loaders, side loaders, front loaders, and roll-offs so no single collection day loses multiple trucks, and consolidate lube, filters, and inspections into one service window per truck. ¹²
November 16 – 20	Final start-up cycle checks, top off fluids, stock the route spares in Section 8.0, confirm backup-truck coverage for the peak weeks.
November 27 – January 15	Daily habits in Section 5.0. No major body work scheduled unless it is a breakdown. Christmas tree collection in the first two weeks of January is the tail of the surge. ^{3, 7}
Late January	Post-season inspection: repeat the hose, cylinder, and wear-shoe checks and pull another fluid sample to see what the season cost you.

8.0 PARTS TO HAVE ON THE SHELF BEFORE THE SEASON

Every item below is one that stops a route when it fails and is cheap to keep on the shelf compared with a day of downtime. Whether you source them from your body dealer, a hose shop, or us, have them on hand before the surge.

- Hydraulic hose assemblies in your body's common lengths and pressure ratings, plus fittings, clamps, and protective sleeving^{10, 14}
- Return, suction, and in-line hydraulic filters and the correct AW-grade fluid — enough for a full change on one unit¹⁵
- Cylinder seal kits for packer, tailgate, and arm cylinders; a spare arm or gripper cylinder for ASL fleets^{10, 11}
- Gripper pads, belts, pins, and bushings for automated arms¹¹
- Packer wear shoes, guide rail wear strips, and hopper floor liners for the highest-tonnage units^{11, 12}
- Tailgate seal, tailgate lock and latch components, and hinge pins
- Body lights, strobes, camera lenses, and harness connectors¹²
- Roll-off cable or reeving components, hook, and rollers; tarp arms and fabric

9.0 A NOTE FROM RDK

We have worked on refuse bodies in Tampa since 1997, and every December the same preventable failures come through the door. This bulletin is meant as a reference your shop can use whether or not the work ever comes to us.

- **Questions are welcome.** A weeping cylinder, a slow arm, a fluid sample you are not sure about — call and talk it through. There is no charge for a conversation.
- **Scheduling advice.** Want a second set of eyes on staggering your fleet so no collection day loses more than one truck? Send us your unit list and route days and we will help lay it out.
- **More to come.** We publish these as the season, the equipment, and the regulations change. Check back at rdk.com for more tips and bulletins, and tell us what topics would help your operation.

Questions about anything in this bulletin?

Call us.

We are glad to talk through what you are seeing on your trucks, whether or not the work comes to our shop. Watch for more tips and bulletins from RDK through the season. RDK Truck Sales · 3214 Adamo Drive, Tampa, Florida · rdk.com

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10.0 ACTION STEPS

1. Pull your refuse unit list and mark the last hydraulic fluid change, filter change, and wear-shoe inspection on each one.
2. Walk every body against Section 4.0 before October 16, with the engine off for the hands-on items.
3. Pull a hydraulic fluid sample from every unit and act on what it shows — water or metal means the source gets found before the season.
4. Order long-lead parts in October and stock the Section 8.0 route spares by mid-November.

5. Stagger the service schedule so no collection day loses more than one truck.
6. Brief drivers on the Section 5.0 daily habits, especially clearing behind the blade and never leaving trash on the truck overnight.
7. Line up backup coverage — a spare truck, a neighboring fleet, or a rental — for November 27 through January 15.
8. Share this bulletin with your shop lead and your drivers, and keep the Section 4.0 checklist on the wall through January.

11.0 SOURCES AND REFERENCES

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