

# Yellow trash bins, bags set for COVID-19 waste

By  
[Rhodina Villanueva](#) (The Philippine Star)

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Infectious waste generated at the San Lazaro Hospital in Manila City is temporarily stored in a designated facility.

Philstar.com / Efigenio Christopher Toledo IV

MANILA, Philippines — Yellow trash bins exclusively for COVID-generated wastes like used face masks may soon be required in all commercial aircraft, passenger ships and commuter trains, Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said yesterday.

“Yellow bins and bags will make it convenient for commuters to dispose of their used face masks so these are not mixed with other trash,” Cimatu said.

“We need to properly segregate and dispose of these potentially contaminated masks, whether these are from our households or these were used while commuting, to prevent the further spread of COVID-19,” Cimatu said.

The National Solid Waste Management Commission (NSWMC), through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), is partnering with the Department of Transportation (DOTr) for the project.

The NSWMC issued Resolution No. 1469, Series of 2021, enjoining the DOTr to install yellow bins and bags in all transport vehicles in the aviation, maritime and railways sectors for the proper storage of COVID-19 waste while in transit.

Cimatu also directed the strict monitoring of health care wastes from international aircraft and cruise ships as these are also potential sources of the virus.

DENR Undersecretary for solid waste management and local government unit concerns Benny Antiporda said the NSWMC resolution is a significant move to properly manage COVID-related health care wastes, noting that “personal protective equipment such as face masks will never go away in the near future.”

“We need to do something about the growing number of these household health care wastes so that they will not just be left or thrown in waterways and main thoroughfares,” Antiporda said.

Other potentially hazardous materials are discarded tissue papers and surgical gloves.

The implementation of Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 has been Cimatu’s priority since he became DENR chief in 2017.

In December 2021, the DENR proposed a P181.6-million budget for the establishment of a preliminary treatment and storage facility for COVID-related health care waste this year.

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