

What are the benefits of the Universal Recycling law?

- Significantly increases Vermont's recycling rate (from 2013 rate of ~36% to projected 50%), conserving raw materials and reducing energy use
- Stimulates economic growth and creates jobs
- Lowers Vermont's greenhouse gas emissions (estimated 38% improvement)
- Conserves remaining landfill space, reducing the need for more landfills or transporting trash out of state
- Standardizes and streamlines solid waste management and requirements statewide
- Supports the local food system and builds stronger community connections

What if I don't have collection or drop-off options for recycling, leaf/yard debris, or food scraps in my area?

All solid waste haulers and solid waste facilities that collect trash must take listed recyclables, leaf and yard debris, and food scraps by specific dates (see www.vtreycles.com). If you are not receiving these services by the required dates, call the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR), Waste Management and Prevention Division at **(802) 828-1138**.

Is anyone going to enforce the law's requirements?

Yes. ANR has enforcement authority. Solid waste districts and towns also have enforcement authority under local ordinances. However, education and outreach are the initial method of implementing Universal Recycling.

Is separating food scraps for composting or animal feed allowed by the Vermont Department of Health?

Yes. Even onsite composting is allowed. See the Department of Health regulations at: www.healthvermont.gov/regs/03food_estab.pdf.

How do I know how much food scrap volume my business or institution produces?

Food scrap collection carts provided by haulers are typically 32- or 68-gallon capacity, and weigh about 150 to 325 pounds when full (using an average of 4.6 lbs/gal of food scraps). Knowing how much you produce will help you get a service that best meets your needs. An average restaurant meal generates about 1lb of food scraps, including food prep, leftovers, and associated "waste" such as coffee grounds, bones, seashells, eggshells, and other compostable materials. Want a more accurate measurement of how much food you're wasting in the trash? Conduct a waste audit by collecting all food scraps separately in bags or a container of a known volume for a week. Get help from your local solid waste district, alliance, or town. Find yours at www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/solid/swmdlist.htm.

I operate multiple food establishments (e.g. stores, cafeterias, restaurants, or facilities). Are they considered one food scrap generator or multiple food scrap generators?

ANR considers any business or institution located at one campus or parcel of land as one generator in terms of total tonnage of food scraps produced annually. For example, if a business operates three food establishments at one campus or on one parcel of land, ANR would consider it one generator and would calculate food scraps generated by combining tonnage from all three locations. However, if a business operates multiple grocery stores in various towns around the state, ANR would consider each store as a separate, single generator.

How much does food scrap collection cost?

Costs will vary just like they do for trash and recycling services, and must be negotiated between you and your hauler. Waste haulers are required to begin offering food scrap collection by July 1, 2017, so costs may decrease as the market expands. Removing food scraps from your trash may allow you to reduce trash hauling costs by reducing collection frequency and/or reducing the size of your trash dumpster. See the list of food scrap haulers at www.vtreycles.com to find haulers in your area. When comparing quotes, consider how frequently your food scrap containers will be emptied and cleaned by your hauler, and how the cost of food scrap collection factors into your overall trash and recycling collection service.

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If compost facilities sell the compost from food scraps, why do I have to pay them to take it?

The majority of the cost you pay is for the service of collection, handling, and hauling. Unlike landfills, which collect between \$60-\$125 per ton of trash, compost facilities collect a much smaller tip fee of approximately \$30-40 per ton of food scraps, and must spend money to process food scraps into compost. Machinery, labor, and fuel, as well as the purchase of other feedstocks such as woodchips that are needed to mix with food scraps to make compost, are just some of the costs incurred by composters.

If customers or employees recycle the wrong things or put food scraps or recyclables in the trash, is my business or institution responsible?

Yes. Your business or institution is responsible for all solid waste materials produced during normal operations. To help customers and staff with separating these materials, we encourage you to use the standardized, statewide, Universal Recycling symbols to create signs and posters for your facility. Download the symbols from the ANR solid waste website at www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/solid/URsymbols.htm.

Is it okay to give food scraps to pig farmers or chicken farmers?

Maybe. Baked goods, fruit and vegetable scraps, and dairy products that are free of meat and have not come into contact with meat/meat products, may be fed to pigs. Guidance on swine feeding is available here: www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/solid/documents/SwineFeedingPolicy.pdf. Chickens may be fed any food scraps including meat, and this practice currently occurs at several farms in the state.

What are considered food scraps and “organic materials”?

“Organic materials” or “organics,” includes anything that was once alive and will decompose into soil. Materials such as food scraps, leaf and yard debris, and uncoated paper are sometimes referred to as “organics,” however this term should not be confused with “certified organic” food, which has a separate definition.

“Food scraps” means discarded or unwanted pre- and post-consumer food or pieces of food, including all spoiled, stale, and rotten food scraps. Food scraps must not contain any trash, produce stickers, butter wrappers, foil, plastic bags, twist ties, or other non-compostable items. When separating food scraps include all of the following:

- Meat, bones, fish, seafood, seafood shells, oils and fats
- Fruits and vegetables including seeds, husks, rinds, peels, and pits
- Eggs, eggshells, cheese, milk, and other dairy products
- Baked goods, dough, crackers, cookies, pasta, beans, tea, coffee grounds and filters, nuts and nut shells
- Soups, dressings, condiments, spices, and sauces

Some food scrap generators produce unique food or food-related materials, such as residuals from animal feed mixes, wooden stir sticks, compostable paper towels, and paper filters from other food-based manufacturing. Check with certified facilities (composters, anaerobic digesters) to determine their willingness to accept other organic materials. A list of composters is available and maintained by ANR on the Universal Recycling webpage listed below.

Can food scraps be ground by an in-sink garbage disposal?

It is not advisable to put more than incidental amounts of food (such as might be rinsed off a plate after it has been scraped) down the drain. Neither septic nor municipal wastewater systems are designed to handle large amounts of organic matter, and doing so is liable to cost you more in the long run, either through frequent plumbing and septic bills, or for pretreatment systems. Disposing of food scraps in a municipal wastewater system may require a special permit or be prohibited by local ordinance.