

## Universal Recycling

## FAQ Businesses/Institutions

### What are the benefits of the Universal Recycling law?

- Significantly increases Vermont's recycling rate (from current rate of ~36% to a goal of 50%), conserving raw materials and reducing energy use.
- Stimulates economic growth and creates jobs
- Lowers Vermont's greenhouse gas emissions (estimated 38% improvement)
- Conserves existing landfill space and reduces the need for more landfills
- Standardizes and streamlines solid waste management and requirements statewide
- Supports the local food system and fosters 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 are required to take listed recyclables, leaf and yard debris, and food scraps by specific dates (dates can be found on the Universal Recycling webpage listed below). If you are not receiving these services by the required dates, call the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR), Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), 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 will be 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 under Vermont Department of Health's regulations found here:

[www.healthvermont.gov/regs/03food\\_estab.pdf](http://www.healthvermont.gov/regs/03food_estab.pdf).

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

Studies have shown that on average, one restaurant meal generates about 1 pound of food scraps. This includes food prep and leftovers as well as associated "waste" such as coffee grounds, bones, seashells, eggshells, and other compostable materials. Food scrap collection carts provided by haulers are typically 32- or 68-gallon capacity, and weigh, on average, 150 to 325 pounds when full (using a standard average of 4.6 pounds per gallon of food scraps). A more accurate way to measure is to conduct a waste audit by simply collecting all food scraps separately for a week or more in bags or a container of a known volume. Contact your local solid waste district, alliance, or town to request assistance with a waste audit to find out exactly how much food and recyclables you may be "wasting" in the trash (a list of solid waste management entities is available at [www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/solid/swmdlist.htm](http://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 or institution operates three food establishments at one campus or on one parcel of land, ANR would consider those as 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. For information on getting started separating and managing food scraps visit the Universal Recycling webpage listed below.

### How much will food scrap collection cost?

Costs will vary just like they do for trash and recycling collection 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 more businesses participate and more haulers offer services. Once you've removed food scraps from

your trash, you may be able to reduce trash hauling costs by reducing collection frequency and/or reducing the size of your trash dumpster. See the statewide list of food scrap haulers (posted to the Universal Recycling webpage listed at the bottom of this sheet) to find haulers in your area that could provide a quote. When comparing quotes, it is important to 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.

#### **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 collection, handling, and hauling of your food scraps. Compost facilities collect a tip fee of approximately \$30-40 per ton of food scraps to help defray capital and operating costs ranging from machinery, labor and fuel to the purchase of other feed stocks such as woodchips that are mixed with food scraps to make compost. Landfill tip fees for trash in Vermont range from approximately \$60 to \$125 per ton.

#### **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 available for free download from the state's solid waste website ([www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/solid/urs/index.htm](http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/solid/urs/index.htm)) to create signs and posters for your facility.

#### **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 guaranteed not to have been associated with meat and meat products, are allowed to be fed to pigs. You can find a state swine feeding guidance document here: [www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/solid/documents/SwineFeedingPolicy.pdf](http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/solid/documents/SwineFeedingPolicy.pdf). Chickens, however can be fed on 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 paper are sometimes referred to as "organics," however this term is not to 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 coffee filters, nuts, and nut shells, and
- 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 our Universal Recycling webpage listed below.

For more information, contact:

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Or visit the **Universal Recycling webpage** here:

[www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/solid/Act148.htm](http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/solid/Act148.htm)