

Vermont landfill ban on recyclables goes into effect July 1

By LISA RATHKE, Associated Press

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP) — Vermonters should think twice before throwing that empty water bottle in the trash bin.

Starting July 1, recyclables such as metal, glass, certain plastics and paper will be banned from landfills as part of a goal of recycling and composting certain solid waste by 2020. For trash haulers that do not already collect recyclables, that means a change.

“The idea behind the law is to make it equally convenient for Vermonters to recycle as it is to throw something away,” said [Deborah Markowitz](#), secretary of the [Vermont Agency of Natural Resources](#).

Several of the state’s solid waste districts already require recycling, and the state’s big trash haulers already take them. But some smaller ones in less-populated areas do not, meaning they may have to spend thousands of dollars to revamp trucks to collect more recycling, provide more customers with recycling containers and educate them about the practice. They could also contract with another hauler to pick up the recyclables.

Haulers can’t charge a separate fee for recycling. The state says haulers may recoup extra costs by increasing their overall trash and recycling fee.

[Jeff Myers](#), owner of Myers Waste and Recycling which serves the central and northern part of the state, said leaders did a good job with the law, even as he weighs whether to raise his fees.

“If we’re going to recycle, we all have to recycle, not pick and choose which parts of the state can recycle, because why should a guy in the city have to recycle and a guy in the outskirts doesn’t have to?” he said.

The state doesn’t foresee enforcing the requirement on individual residents but says it will ensure haulers are offering recycling collection.

The landfill ban is part of a state law passed in 2012 addressing universal recycling of certain solid waste. Leaves, grass and other yard waste will be barred from landfills beginning in 2016, and a household food waste ban will take effect in 2020.

Before the law was passed, a study by the Environmental Protection Agency found that states on average recycle about 35 percent of their waste. Vermont was at 36 percent, which lawmakers said was not enough.

Four other states have varying policies about what recyclables can and cannot go into a landfill, according to Washington-based National Waste & Recycling Association. Some of those state’s policies are as comprehensive as Vermont’s; some have just singled out certain items, said [Chris Doherty](#), spokesman for NW&RA.

In the past five years, there's been a shift in thinking about waste collection, from stuff that can be thrown away to resources that would be valuable to keep, such as aluminum, Markowitz said.

Haulers can either offer recycling services themselves or subcontract with another hauler to do so. The state is offering some additional time for some of the haulers in the remote Northeast Kingdom to comply with the new requirement, Markowitz said.

The state will focus on providing technical assistance and education in the first few years, officials said.

“In these initial years it's all about getting the word out and educating Vermonters, making sure that the systems make it successful,” Markowitz said.