

HENNEPIN COUNTY

MINNESOTA



Food waste recycling requirements for businesses

Businesses that generate large quantities of food waste are required to recycle their food waste beginning January 1, 2020.

This guide answers common questions to help businesses understand the requirements.



Food is a resource, not trash

You play an important role in easing the burden your business places on the environment. About half of the waste generated in Hennepin County comes from businesses, and almost 20 percent of that waste is food. By putting food waste to a better use, your efforts can:

- Feed people in need
- Feed animals
- Make compost for healthier soils and plants



Food is a problem in landfills



When food and other organic materials decompose in landfills they produce methane, a greenhouse gas that is 84 times more potent than carbon dioxide over a 20-year period. Climate experts

prioritize getting food out of the trash as a top climate change solution because it can rapidly decrease greenhouse gas emissions.

How do I determine if my business is required to recycle food waste?

The requirement applies to businesses that meet **both** of these two key factors:

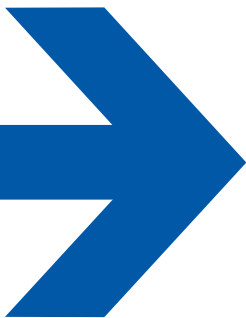
1. First, your business is one of these sector types:

- Restaurants
- Grocery stores
- Food wholesalers, distributors and manufacturers
- Hotels
- Hospitals
- Sports venues
- Event centers
- Caterers
- Nursing and residential care facilities
- Office buildings with dining services
- Farmers markets
- Food shelves and food banks
- Colleges and universities with dining services
- Shopping centers
- Airports
- Golf clubs and country clubs
- Rental kitchens and shared-use commercial kitchens

2. Second, your business generates enough waste.

The standard is either to:

- Generate one ton or more of trash per week; or
- Contract for eight cubic yards or more of trash service per week.



If your business meets both of these factors, then it must comply with the county's food waste recycling requirement.

How do I determine my trash amount?

Find a copy of your trash bill and look at the trash container your waste hauler empties. You must know whether you have a cart, dumpster or a compactor to determine the amount of trash you generate.

Dumpster



- You will need to know the size and how often your trash is picked up. Call your hauler if your waste bill does not have this information.
- Multiply the size of the dumpster by how many times it is picked up per week to determine your weekly trash service.

Example: One 4 cubic yard dumpster
x 2 pickups per week = 8 cubic yards of
contracted service per week

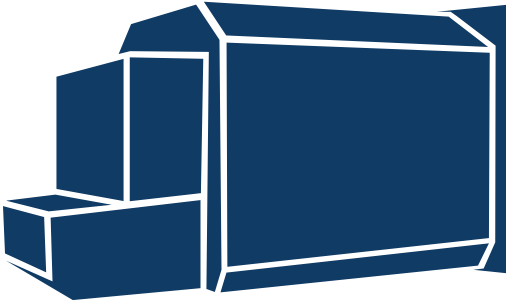
Cart



- If you have carts emptied by a waste hauler, you will need to know the number of carts and how often your waste is picked up. Call your waste hauler if your bill does not have this information.
- Multiply the number of carts by the number of pickups per week, and divide by two. The equation assumes your cart is 96 or 98 gallons, which is about half a cubic yard.

Example: 8 carts x 2 pickups per week / 2 =
8 cubic yards of contracted service per week

Compactor



- Your bill should show the weight in tons. Call your waste hauler if it does not have this information.
- Divide the weight by the number of days since it was emptied to get a daily weight. Then multiply by 7 days to determine how much trash your business generates per week.

Example: $12 \text{ tons} / 3 \text{ days of accumulation of waste} = 4 \text{ tons/day} \times 7 \text{ days} = 28 \text{ tons per week}$



For additional help determining the amount of trash your businesses generates or the level of trash service your business purchases, especially in situations where trash service is shared, see the [Determining Commercial Waste Levels](#) online guidance document.

OK, I've determined my business is required to recycle food waste. What do I need to do to be in compliance?

To be in compliance, a business must:

1. Have food waste recycling service in place.
2. Provide food waste collection containers back-of-house (such as in kitchens and dishwashing areas) and properly label them.
3. Separate food waste from trash and recycling in back-of-house operations. Food waste recycling is not required in front-of-house areas, but may be required by city ordinance depending on your to-go containers/packaging (currently required in Minneapolis and St Louis Park).
4. Provide education and train employees annually.

Each of these standards is explained in more detail on the following pages.





1. Have food waste recycling service in place

To meet this standard you must use one or more of the following methods for recycling food waste:

- Donation - food donation must be used in combination with one or more of the other methods listed below.
- Food-to-animals (hog farmers or livestock animal feed manufacturers)
- Organics recycling for composting
- Any other method would require approval from the county. Contact the county to discuss other management options.



Using an in-sink garbage disposal is not an acceptable method for recycling food waste. Disposing of any more than incidental amounts of food waste through the public sewer system to avoid off-site disposal is prohibited.

(Metropolitan Council Environmental Services Waste Discharge Rules - Article IV, Section 406.21)

Businesses subject to the requirement should be able to add food waste recycling without greatly increasing their overall waste costs. County staff can help you determine how to set up food waste recycling in the most cost-effective way for your operation.



Photo: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

2. Provide food waste collection containers back-of-house (such as kitchens and dishwashing areas) and properly label them.

To meet this standard, containers must be:

- Large enough so they don't overflow and result in food being placed in the trash instead.
- Located in areas where food and food scraps are generated.
- Placed near or next to trash containers wherever there is a trash container back-of-house, there should be a food waste collection container next to or very near it.
- Labeled to clearly identify what waste should be placed in them. Labels must be replaced if damaged, faded, illegible, or when images or text conflict with the acceptable materials.
 - Labels must be color-coded. The color green is required for organics for composting. There is no specific color designated for food-to-animals.



Labels that meet these requirements are available to [order online](#) from the county.

3. Separate food waste from trash and recycling in back-of-house operations.

To meet this standard, staff must be separating food waste and placing it in the food waste collection containers. Back-of-house areas are where staff manage the waste. Examples of back-of-house areas are kitchens, dishwashing stations, and bussing stations that are not for customer use.



It is not required to separate other compostable items such as paper towels or compostable food serviceware. It is worth noting that food waste collection is not required in front-of-house operations and in fact is discouraged unless all the food serviceware provided to customers is reusable or certified compostable.

4. Provide education and train employees annually.

To meet this standard, you must:

- Post a sorting guide in an area visible to employees. The guide should provide the necessary instructions for employees to understand which materials they are required to separate from the trash.
- Train all new employees and subcontractors who work with food on the food waste recycling procedures initially and at least once per year thereafter. Keep a record of trainings.



Sorting guides and training resources that meet the requirement are available from the county.

Plus, you must recycle

All businesses required to collect food waste are also required to have conventional recycling service under the ordinance. Similar standards of compliance apply, but recycling is required in all areas of the business, not just back-of-house areas.

To be in compliance, a business must:

- Have recycling service in place and collect at least three types of items (e.g. cardboard, cans and bottles). Comingled recycling service meets this requirement.
- Pair recycling bins with trash bins and properly label them.



For additional help understanding the conventional recycling requirements, see the Business Recycling Requirements Guide online.

Who is responsible?

The business owner must provide adequate service for material collected onsite for recycling and food waste recycling. If a business in a multi-tenant building must comply with the ordinance, but the whole building is not affected, the ordinance requires the owner/managers to either provide food waste recycling service or facilitate/allow the tenant(s) to set up their own food waste recycling service and collection.

How will the county enforce the requirement?

The county has the authority to inspect properties and may issue warnings or citations for noncompliance. Businesses will be given an opportunity to comply prior to the county taking enforcement action.





Take advantage of free resources available

Site visits: A county staff person can come to your location and help you determine how to set up food waste recycling within your operations.

Presentations or training: County staff are available to come to your site and train employees about recycling and waste through hands-on, interactive trainings. Webinar and remote learning options are also available.

Posters, signs and labels: Order free posters, signs and stickers so you can label bins at your business.

Grants: Grants are available to start or improve recycling and food waste recycling programs at your business. Funding can be used to purchase recycling containers, start hauling services, purchase start-up supplies such as compostable bags and foodservice ware, or improve onsite recycling infrastructure.

Learn more

More information about the requirements, signs, labels, grants and food waste recycling is available at hennepin.us/businessorganics

Contact: businessrecycling@hennepin.us or call 612-543-9298.



Hennepin County
Environment and Energy
701 4th Ave. S., Suite 700
Minneapolis, MN 55415

612-543-9298

hennepin.us/businessorganics