

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

- Increases Vermont's recycling and composting rates, conserves resources, and reduces energy use
- Stimulates economic growth and creates jobs
- Lowers Vermont's greenhouse gas emissions from waste by an estimated 37%
- Conserves landfill space, and reduces the need for more landfills or transporting trash out of state
- Standardizes recycling and composting requirements statewide

**Is anyone going to enforce the law's requirements?**

Yes. The Agency of Natural Resources (ANR), Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has enforcement authority. However, education and outreach are the initial methods of implementation. Solid waste districts and towns may have enforcement authority under local ordinances.

**What do "food scraps" and "organic materials" include?**

"Organic materials" or "organics," are anything that was once alive and will decompose into soil. Organics includes items such as food scraps, leaf and yard debris, and uncoated paper. "Food scraps" means trimmings and byproducts from prepping food and discarded or unwanted pre- and post-consumer food, including spoiled, stale, moldy, or partially-eaten food. For example, "food scraps" includes:

- Meat, bones, fish, seafood, seafood shells, oils and fats
- All parts of fruits and vegetables including seeds, husks, rinds, peels, and pits
- Eggs, egg shells, cheese, milk, and other dairy products
- Grains and beans, in all cooked or uncooked forms
- Prepared foods, dressings, condiments, spices, and sauces
- Tea, coffee grounds and filters, nuts and nut shells

Make sure there are no produce stickers, butter packets, plastic bags, twist ties, or other non-compostable items in your food scraps. Ask your composter or hauler if they accept other organic materials, such as residual animal feed, wooden stir sticks, or compostable paper. Find [a food scrap hauler](#) at [VTrecycles.com](http://VTrecycles.com).

**How much does food scrap collection cost?**

Costs vary, as they do for trash and recycling services, and must be negotiated with your hauler. Waste haulers must offer food scrap collection by July 1, 2020. When comparing quotes, consider how often the hauler would empty and clean your containers and how food scrap collection factors into your overall costs. As you remove food scraps from your trash, you may be able to lower your trash fees by getting trash picked up less often and/or reducing your trash dumpster size. Find a [hauler](#) at [VTrecycles.com](http://VTrecycles.com).

**What if there are no collection or drop-off options for recycling, leaf/yard debris, or food scraps near me?**

All solid waste facilities and drop-offs that collect trash must separately collect the required recyclables and food scraps (and may charge to do so); they must also collect leaf and yard debris seasonally. Haulers must offer recycling collection. If you are not receiving these services, call ANR at **(802) 828-1138**.

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

Any business or institution located on one parcel of land is considered one generator. If a business operates multiple locations around the state, ANR considers each location a separate generator.

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

Yes. Even on-site composting is allowed. See the Department of Health regulations at [healthvermont.gov](http://healthvermont.gov).

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

An average restaurant meal generates ~ 0.5 lb. of food scraps, including prep, leftovers, and compostable “wastes” such as coffee grounds, bones, seashells, and eggshells. Food scrap haulers typically provide 48-gallon collection totes, which weigh ~ 200 lbs. when full (using an average of 4.6 lbs./gal of food scraps). To make your estimate more accurate, collect all food scraps in bags you can weigh or a container of a known volume for a week. Ask your local solid waste district or town for no-cost help at [802recycles.com](http://802recycles.com).

**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 properly separate these materials, use the standardized, statewide, Universal Recycling symbols (download at [VTrecycles.com](http://VTrecycles.com)) to create signs and posters for your facility.

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

It costs money to collect and haul materials and to turn food scraps into compost. The sale of compost does not cover these costs. Composting costs include machinery, labor, fuel, and other compost ingredients, such as woodchips, that must be mixed in with food scraps.

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

Only food scraps that are free of meat or fish and have not come into contact with meat/fish or their oils/juices may be fed to pigs. Guidance on swine feeding is available here: <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/sites/agriculture/files/documents/Feeding%20Food%20Scraps%20to%20Pigs%20January%202018.pdf>. Chickens may be given any food scraps, including meat.

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

Septic systems are not designed to handle large amounts of food scraps, so putting them down the drain could clog pipes and lead to a need for more frequent septic tank pumping. If your sink drains to a municipal wastewater system, ask your town whether food scraps can go down the drain. Every wastewater treatment system is built differently and has specific requirements.

**What do I do if my landlord provides trash collection but not recycling or food scrap collection?**

Ask your [solid waste district or town](#) if a local ordinance requires your landlord to provide recycling or food scrap collection. If it's required, your landlord must add these services. If your business shares a dumpster with residences, your hauler must provide trash and recycling for one bundled fee. If your hauler will not do this, call ANR. If these situations don't apply to you, your business still must properly recycle and separate food scraps according to state law. Ask your landlord to provide recycling or food scrap collection as part of your lease or ask them to reduce your rent if you independently hire a recycling or food scrap hauler. When people start to separate recycling and food scraps from the trash, they can sometimes save money by switching to a smaller trash dumpster or less frequent pickups. When several businesses share a trash dumpster, sometimes they contract for recycling and food scrap services together. Having trouble? Your local waste district or town ([802recycles.com](http://802recycles.com)) or ANR can provide no-cost assistance.

**Waste Management & Prevention Division**

802-828-1138

[VTrecycles.com](http://VTrecycles.com)