



GUIDANCE FOR BUSINESSES CONTRACTING FOR TRASH, RECYCLING, AND FOOD WASTE SERVICES

This document provides guidelines to businesses and institutions for establishing or modifying contracts for trash, recyclables, and/or organics hauling. The guidance is organized into four topic areas:

- **Knowing Your Waste**
- **Creating and Adjusting Contracts**
- **Complying with Waste Disposal Bans and Other Regulations**
- **Communicating Effectively**

KNOWING YOUR WASTE

Before contacting a hauler, take a look at your waste so you know what materials your business discards. Many of the materials may be recyclable and/or banned from disposal in Massachusetts (See [Complying with Waste Bans](#) section below). If your business serves food, you may want to consider collecting your food scraps (commonly referred to as “organics”) separately from the trash to be sent to composting, animal feed, or anaerobic digestion operations.

- Look into barrels and dumpsters to get a rough sense of the type and volume of material your business is discarding. Identify any recyclables that are being disposed of in the trash.
- Conduct a waste assessment to get more detailed data. The US Environmental Protection Agency provides instructions for conducting a [waste assessment](#) to determine the amount and types of waste your facility generates. You can conduct such an assessment by [examining records](#), doing a [walk-through of the facility](#), or completing a [waste sort](#).
- Use the RecyclingWorks [Food Waste Estimation Guide](#) to estimate your food waste generation.
- Ask your hauler for regular detailed reports for your waste, recycling, and organics.

CREATING AND ADJUSTING CONTRACTS

When creating, modifying, and renewing contracts, ensure that your contract provides the services that match your business needs. If you are experiencing high service costs, consider soliciting quotes from different haulers to compare your charges and services with the market. Here are some things to discuss when contracting for service with a waste hauler:

Creating Contracts:

Service Costs

- Hauling invoices can appear complicated because they include several fees. It is important to understand how they are calculated and if they fluctuate. For example, recycling charges or rebates are tied to recycling markets and may change monthly. Contamination charges may also change your monthly amount.
- Review what charges, such as capital investment, will be included in monthly service costs or be required upfront.
- Understand if you will be charged hauling and tonnage fees or a flat rate pickup charge. Additionally, confirm if there will be any increases during the contract period on disposal or hauling costs.
- Clarify what the extra surcharges are, such as container rental, fuel/environmental, container delivery/removal, extra pickups, overflowing containers, waste ban contamination, contamination of recycling or organics streams, etc.

Pickup Schedule and Frequency

- Communicate any pickup scheduling restrictions to your hauler, such as physical barriers or a noise ordinance that restricts the hauler's pickup schedule.
- Evaluate cost differential between scheduled and on-call services.

- Understand how missed pickups will be rescheduled and communicated to you (e.g. car blocking container, holiday schedules, and inclement weather).
- Ask how materials will be managed for special events or other instances requiring additional service. Confirm details such as whether extra bins will be provided or extra pickups scheduled.

Container Sizes and Types

- Haulers may provide compactors, dumpsters, or carts for your business.
- “Right size” your collection containers and collection frequency to optimize diversion, service efficiency, and cost effectiveness. Check containers just before they are emptied to assess capacity needs.
- Once you have implemented a recycling, organics, or other diversion program, remember to evaluate your trash needs, as you will likely be able to reduce service frequency or container size as material is diverted from the trash.
- Clarify who is responsible for cleaning and maintaining collection containers (you or your hauler). Work with your hauler to identify any access or safety issues with container placement (e.g. icy roads in the winter, overhead wires, traffic).
- See the RecyclingWorks [Equipment for Collecting Trash, Recycling, and Food Waste](#) webpage for more information on equipment typically provided by haulers, and equipment for collecting and moving material within your facility.

Handling Contamination and Rejected Loads

- Placing material in the wrong containers can cause contamination issues. For instance, plastic bags are considered contaminants in organics and recycling bins.
- Check with your hauler to learn about specific contamination thresholds (in weight or volume), as these may vary.
- Photos can be a helpful tool for identifying contaminants and improving the quality of your collected material.
- Understand what your hauler charges for a rejected load. After your hauler advises you of a contaminated load, you may have a chance to remove contaminants instead of having the container serviced as trash.
- Make sure your hauler knows the best contact at your business to reach out to if there are contamination issues. Similarly, you should have current contact information for your hauler.

Hauler Reporting

- Reports provide data on the volume or weight of materials that your hauler collects.
- Ask how frequently you will receive reports and if they will include information on end sites.
- Knowing the end sites for your materials may help guide the management of your waste program. For example, if you use compostableware and your food scraps are sent to an anaerobic digester then your compostableware is likely being sorted out and disposed. If you are interested in learning about your disposal and recycling facilities, ask your hauler to schedule a tour.
- Reports may include recommendations for improving your program and efficiency. For example, your hauler may flag common contaminants. Additionally, reports can reveal if your bin sizing and collection rates are oversized.

Invoicing

- Request a sample invoice to ensure you understand it before entering into a service contract.
- If any charges are unclear, ask your hauler about them.
- Request unbundled pricing (i.e., separate prices for each stream) or, if pricing is bundled, request a breakdown in order to compare cost incentives for diversion.

Contract Terms

- Contracts are typically for three-year terms but you should discuss options with your hauler.
- Many contracts automatically renew for the full term. Be aware of your renewal date and set a reminder to check in with your hauler at least 90 days in advance of the contract end date.
- Check to see if there is a cancellation provision that protects you from unsatisfactory performance.
- Ensure that your contract allows you to hire outside services if your hauler does not provide them or the costs are too high, such as organics pick-up.

Adjusting Existing Contracts:

Haulers typically allow adjustments to service levels mid contract. Adjustments can include diverting new materials, changing sizes of containers, and changing pickup schedules.

Sub-Contracting:

If you request a service that your hauler doesn't provide, they may subcontract it, or ask you to seek the service on your own. This is particularly relevant for organics, electronics, and hazardous waste.

- The advantage of sub-contracting is you only have one waste hauling contract to manage. However, it is important that your hauler communicates effectively with the subcontractor about any service concerns.
- If your hauler has a bulk rate for services with the subcontractor, working through your primary hauler may save money.
- In other cases, subcontracting may be costlier but provides ease for you as the customer by streamlining contracts.

If a service is subcontracted, communication will likely be between you and the primary hauler, rather than directly with the subcontractor. See communication section below for expectations.

COMPLYING WITH WASTE DISPOSAL BANS AND OTHER REGULATIONS

Many businesses are not aware that there are materials banned from disposal in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) bans easy-to-recycle materials (like cardboard) and toxic materials (e.g. lead acid batteries) from disposal. Your municipality might have additional bylaws/ordinances or regulations requiring businesses to recycle.

Your business, waste hauler (including subcontractors and/or brokers), and disposal sites are all responsible for properly handling waste according to local, state, and federal regulations. It is important to be aware of the waste bans and regulations, and properly separate materials to comply with them.

Current waste ban materials include:

- Recyclable Paper and Cardboard
- Glass/Aluminum/Metal/Plastic Containers
- Leaves and Yard Waste
- Cathode Ray Tubes (TVs and Computer Monitors)
- White Goods (Major Appliances)
- Some Construction & Demolition Materials (including Asphalt Pavement, Brick, Concrete, Wood, Metal, and Clean Gypsum Wallboard)
- Tires
- Lead Acid Batteries
- Commercial Organics (businesses and institutions that dispose ≥ 1 ton of food scraps per week must divert it from disposal.) Please note, in the 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan, the MassDEP plans to change this threshold from 1 ton to 0.5 tons by 2022.

Additional resources for information on regulations and ordinances:

- Waste Ban Compliance Tips for:
 - Retailers [\[English\]](#) [\[Español\]](#)
 - Restaurants [\[English\]](#) [\[Español\]](#)
 - Food Manufacturers and Distributors [\[English\]](#) [\[Español\]](#)
 - Colleges and Universities [\[English\]](#) [\[Español\]](#)
 - Property Managers [\[English\]](#)
- MassDEP's [Your Business and the Waste Ban Fact Sheet](#).
- [Guidance for Businesses, Institutions, and Haulers on the Commercial Organic Materials Waste Ban](#) for questions about the Food Waste Ban.
- [Materials Guidance](#) for specific information on recyclables.
- Check with your City/Town Public Works Department or Board of Health regarding local requirements.

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

Clear communication to staff and patrons about where materials go and how they are processed helps increase participation in materials diversion programs and decrease contamination.

Regular communication with a waste hauler leads to more effective waste management services and higher diversion rates of recyclable and organic materials. Problems in a waste management program can be identified by staff, drivers, and/or management teams. Therefore, building a relationship and ensuring regular communication between your business and your hauler is key. When expectations and service needs are agreed upon, the trash, recycling, and organics can be handled properly and efficiently.

The following strategies can help support effective waste program:

Signage, Containers, and Training

- Request signs for trash, recycling, and organics collection containers that reflect the waste materials at your facility.
- Clearly designate containers by shape, color, and lid opening configuration to optimize diversion.
- Ask your hauler what materials are accepted in the trash, recycling, and organics streams.
- Sort materials correctly.
- Provide regular staff training.
 - Consider establishing a team in your organization to check bins and containers, and to train new staff on recycling and sorting initiatives.

Reduce Contamination

- Consider locking container doors to limit unauthorized access.
- Regularly check for contamination and re-train staff.
- Respond to feedback quickly to prevent rejected loads.

Consider Resource Management (RM) Contracting

- RM Contracting is a performance based contracting approach designed to reduce waste and increase diversion through dedicated customer service, detailed reporting, and program analysis.
- MassDEP has a [Sample Resource Management Contract](#).

Request RecyclingWorks Assistance

- If your business would like help improving your recycling program, use [RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts](#) as a resource.
- RecyclingWorks can work with businesses and haulers to implement a program, including training, signage, and explanation of the waste bans.
- To request assistance, call the RecyclingWorks hotline at 888-254-5525 or email info@recyclingworksma.com.

About this Document

The RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts program worked with businesses, institutions, waste haulers, handling facilities, municipal officials, and industry associations to develop this consensus-based guidance on contracting for trash, recycling, and food waste hauling services. In 2016, RecyclingWorks conducted interviews with nine waste haulers and held five stakeholder discussions in Worcester, Springfield, and Boston, as well as at the Fall 2016 College & University Forum and WasteWise Forum.



If you have any questions or feedback, please contact RecyclingWorks at 888-254-5525, email info@recyclingworksma.com, or visit recyclingworksma.com.