



WASTE BAN COMPLIANCE TIPS FOR FOOD MANUFACTURERS AND DISTRIBUTORS

WHAT ARE WASTE BANS?

Many businesses are not aware that a number of materials are banned from disposal in the trash in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) bans easy-to-recycle materials (like cardboard) from the trash, and your municipality might have additional bylaws/ordinances or regulations requiring businesses to recycle. Your business, your waste hauler, and solid waste facilities are all responsible for complying with waste ban requirements. See the RecyclingWorks website for an [overview of waste bans](#).

Food manufacturers and distributors that place banned items in the trash run the risk of solid waste facilities rejecting their waste, being charged additional fees, and receiving enforcement from MassDEP.

Businesses that receive MassDEP enforcement often already have a recycling program for that material. However, a number of common issues can result in recyclable materials being placed in the trash, including:

- Breakdown in staff participation
- Poor signage
- Miscommunication with hauler about what materials go in each collection container
- Collection containers are not the right size
- Pickup schedule not properly set
- No backup plan for equipment failures

For food manufacturers and distributors, key waste ban materials include:

- Food waste, including packaged items (in excess of 1/2 ton per week)
- Cardboard
- Clean wood, including pallets
- Paper
- Glass, Aluminum, Metal, and Plastic containers

[Visit this link](#) for a full list of waste ban materials.



DIVERTING FOOD WASTE FROM DISPOSAL

Food material is typically the largest single component of waste generated by food manufacturers and distributors, and diverting this material from disposal can often reduce disposal and overall operational costs. The MassDEP established a commercial organics waste ban in October, 2014 which requires all businesses and institutions that generate one ton or more of food waste per week to divert that material from disposal.

Food manufacturers and distributors can donate unsold products to food rescue organizations or discounted food outlets that accept and distribute surplus food. It is important to build a network of food donation partners to ensure that short shelf-life products have several potential outlets for quick distribution. Massachusetts law provides protections for donated food, even food that is past date, so long as that food was handled in accordance with state food safety regulations. For more information regarding food donation in Massachusetts, see the RecyclingWorks [food donation guidance webpage](#).

Businesses subject to the Massachusetts commercial organics waste ban should separate non-edible food scraps from trash and recycling. Food scrap collection strategies will vary based on a facility's available space, layout, and hauler requirements. Food scraps should be collected by a hauler at a frequency that minimizes odor, insects, vectors, and other pests.

Packaged foods may not be able to be sold when they are out-of-date, mislabeled, damaged, or spoiled, which may happen unexpectedly (for instance, during a power failure). Packaged food is also subject to the commercial organics waste ban, assuming a facility is generating more than one ton of that material for disposal per week. Packaged foods that cannot be sold or donated can be sent to a de-packaging facility, where organic contents are separated from the packaging to be processed through anaerobic digestion, composting or animal feed. It is important to plan ahead and establish a working relationship with a de-packaging facility so that their services can be rendered on a short notice and as-needed basis. The RecyclingWorks website includes a [list of organizations that accept food material for de-packaging from Massachusetts sources](#).



RECYCLING CARDBOARD

More than 80% of all MassDEP waste ban enforcement is for cardboard! Cardboard is a readily recyclable material with well-established markets for processing.

Talk to your waste hauler about options for collecting cardboard for recycling, such as:

- Compactor
- Dumpster
- Carts
- Baler

Material specifications could include cardboard only, cardboard mixed with paper, or single stream (cardboard, paper, and containers). See the RecyclingWorks website for [information on how cardboard is recycled](#).



Cardboard that is contaminated with food or liquid waste should not be recycled. Waxed cardboard is not a waste ban material and also should not be recycled. However, facilities that collect food scraps for composting may be able to combine cardboard contaminated with food or liquids and waxed cardboard with the food waste. Consult your hauler to find out if this is an option.

RECYCLING WOODEN PALLETS

Pallets utilized for packaging and shipping are often thrown away after a single use. The most common type, wooden pallets, are usually considered clean wood, which is banned from a disposal in Massachusetts landfills.

When internal reuse is not possible, there are businesses in Massachusetts who focus exclusively on pallet reuse and recycling. Many vendors in Massachusetts will take pallets back after a delivery. If not, there are also companies who accept, repair, and resell gently used pallets.

Wooden pallets that cannot be reused should be recycled. Recycled pallets are often dismantled for scrap wood, chipped, composted, turned into yard mulch, or used as boiler fuel. To find a pallet recycler in your area, please use the [RecyclingWorks Find-A-Recycler tool](#).



COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR HAULER

Talk to your waste hauler to learn about options for adjusting your dumpsters/compactors so your business can recycle all waste ban materials. When you set up or improve your recycling program, you will likely be able to reduce the size or pickup frequency of your trash container, which can create cost savings.

Just as it is important to keep recyclables out of the trash, it is equally important to keep trash out of recycling containers. Work with your hauler to identify which materials are accepted at your recycling outlet and which are not. Common contaminants include plastic bags, straws, wrappers, Styrofoam, and rubber gloves. Food waste is also considered a contaminant when it is comingled with recyclable materials such as cardboard, cans, or bottles.

Request that your hauler provide you with direct and immediate feedback on waste ban materials observed in your trash containers, or when they receive notice about waste ban failed loads from solid waste facilities. This is particularly important if your business has a compactor or roll-off container, as drivers can observe and identify waste ban materials in these loads at the disposal site.

If you rely on equipment such as a baler or compactor for your recycling, talk with your hauler about back up plans to ensure that materials can continue to be recycled if equipment requires repair or replacement.

SIGNS

Clearly label all trash, recycling, and food waste containers. Customize these signs to include the specific needs and waste materials at your facility.

TRAINING

Regularly train staff on how to recycle and separate food waste. For more information on working effectively with your hauler to set up a recycling or composting program, see RecyclingWorks' [Guidance for Businesses Contracting for Trash, Recycling, and Food Waste Services](#).

RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts is a free assistance program that helps businesses reduce waste, and maximize recycling, reuse, donation, and composting opportunities. Contact RecyclingWorks for customized assistance for your business, including how to:

- Start or improve recycling
- Comply with Massachusetts waste ban regulations
- Find haulers and processors of recyclable materials
- Provide employee training and signage
- Save money on waste removal