



# WASTE BAN COMPLIANCE TIPS FOR PROPERTY MANAGERS



The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) bans easy-to-recycle materials, such as cardboard, from the trash. This is an overview of waste ban requirements, avoiding fines or fees, and tips on tenant compliance.

[More detailed information](#) for Property Managers.

## WHAT ARE WASTE BANS?

Many businesses and institutions are not aware that a number of materials are banned from disposal in Massachusetts. Your municipality might have additional bylaws/ordinances or regulations requiring businesses and institutions to recycle.

As a property manager, you, your tenants, your waste hauler, and solid waste facilities are all responsible for complying with waste ban requirements.

Even when a property manager offers recycling containers, multifamily, commercial, and mixed-use properties may receive MassDEP enforcement when recyclable materials are placed in the trash, as no person shall dispose, transfer for disposal, or contract for disposal or transport of the restricted materials. A number of common issues can result in recyclable materials being placed in the trash, including:

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

Visit the MassDEP website to learn more about [Massachusetts waste bans](#).

**Waste ban materials applicable to property managers, depending on whether your tenants are residential, commercial, or both, include:**

- **Cardboard**
- **Paper**
- **Glass, Metal, and Plastic Containers**
- **Commercial Food Waste (> one-half ton per week)**
- **Leaf and Yard Waste**
- **Construction and Demolition Materials**
- **Textiles, Mattresses, and Box Springs (Effective November 2022)**

## RECYCLING CARDBOARD AND PAPER

All recyclable paper, cardboard, and paperboard is banned from disposal, and more than 80% of all MassDEP waste ban enforcement is for cardboard! Material could be collected as cardboard only, cardboard mixed with paper, or single stream recycling (cardboard, paper, and containers). **Paper or cardboard that is contaminated with food or liquid waste should go in the trash.** Grease is okay on pizza boxes but do not include food or wax paper lining in recycling collections. [More information on recycling cardboard and paper.](#)

## RECYCLING BOTTLES AND CANS

Bottles and cans are also waste ban materials, and are often co-collected as part of a [single stream recycling](#) program at many residential and commercial properties in Massachusetts. This includes glass, plastic, and metal containers, bottles, jars, jugs, tubs, and cans. Ensuring that all recyclables remain uncontaminated by food, liquids, or tangles such as plastic bags is crucial. Plastic, metal, or glass containers should be thoroughly emptied and rinsed; minor residue is generally acceptable. [More information on recycling bottles and cans.](#)

## MATTRESSES, BOX SPRINGS, AND TEXTILES

On November 1, 2022, the MassDEP added mattresses, box springs, and textiles to the list of materials that are banned from disposal. Most mattress components, such as fabric, wood, scrap metal, and foam can be recovered for reuse, repurposing, or recycling. There is a growing infrastructure for mattress recycling in Massachusetts, and many mattress recyclers offer pick-up services. Consider siting a closed or covered container, particularly if there is a season when your property has a large number of move-outs. Many Massachusetts municipalities offer mattress recycling programs, including drop-off options that residents of multifamily properties can access. These programs typically do not provide pick-up options for private multifamily properties. Please note that the waste disposal ban does not include mattresses and textiles that are contaminated with mold, bodily fluids, insects, oil, or hazardous substances. [More information on recycling mattresses, box springs, and textiles.](#)

Textile material includes clothing, footwear, bedding, towels, curtains, fabric, and similar products, except for textiles that are contaminated with mold, bodily fluids, insects, oil, or hazardous substances. Most textiles can be reused, upcycled or recycled into new items. It is important to collect and recover textiles separately, as they do not belong in recycling containers of any kind and can cause equipment damage and worker safety challenges at recycling facilities. For residential properties, consider facilitating monthly or seasonal donation collection pick-ups with a local organization. Some commercial tenants, such as clothing retailers, may also generate textiles. If your property includes multiple businesses that generate textiles, consider siting one or more collection containers for shared use.



## DIVERTING FOOD WASTE FROM DISPOSAL

Food material can be the largest single component of waste generated by certain business tenants. Diverting food waste from disposal may reduce waste volume and overall operational costs.

In locations where patrons dispose of their own waste, offering consumers separate receptacles for solid organic waste, liquid waste (such as leftover soft drinks), recyclables (such as cans and bottles), and trash (such as plastic straws or wrappers) helps empower them to become part of the solution to wasted food. [More information on options available to recover food waste.](#)

**Commercial tenants that are likely subject to this ban include:**

- **Restaurants**
- **Food manufacturers & distributors**
- **Large offices with corporate cafeterias**
- **Supermarkets & grocery stores**
- **Lodging & hotels**
- **Event venues**

**Residential-only properties are exempt from the commercial organics ban.**

## DIVERTING LEAF AND YARD WASTE FROM DISPOSAL

If you are contracting for landscaping services, ask your contractor what they are doing with leaf and yard waste to ensure it is not going into the trash.

Properties that generate very small amounts of leaf and yard waste may want to designate an area on site to first consolidate the material until there is a large enough volume to warrant hauling off-site.

## DIVERTING CONSTRUCTION & DEMOLITION MATERIALS AND LARGE APPLIANCES

Some of the common construction and demolition (C&D) materials generated from renovations, including unit turnover projects, are banned from disposal in Massachusetts. These include asphalt pavement, brick and concrete (ABC), untreated and clean wood, metal, and clean gypsum wallboard.



Residential unit renovations may also include white goods, such as refrigerators, gas or electric ovens and ranges, and clothes washers and dryers. These are also banned from disposal.

See the RecyclingWorks website for additional information about [managing C&D materials](#).

## HOW TO COMPLY

- Know your tenants' waste and what items are regularly thrown away
- Communicate with your hauler and choose the most effective containers
- Set up waste collection area(s) in reasonably convenient and accessible places
- Make sure whomever is moving the waste is aware of the bans, and knows what to do with contamination
- Have clear signage that is customized to your specific needs and waste materials
- Communicate regularly with your tenants, including move-in packets, touring waste areas, newsletters, meetings, etc.

Visit the RecyclingWorks website for complete information on [Waste Ban Compliance for Property Managers](#).

**RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts** is a recycling assistance program that helps businesses and institutions reduce waste and maximize recycling, reuse, and food recovery opportunities. Contact RecyclingWorks for customized assistance for your business.



Property managers can utilize free tools from Recycle Smart MA to help improve the quality of recycling at their facilities.

The searchable Recyclopedia tool and Smart Recycling Guide can be especially useful for tenants: [recyclesmartma.org](https://recyclesmartma.org)