



WASTE BAN COMPLIANCE TIPS FOR RESTAURANTS

WHAT ARE WASTE BANS?

Many businesses are not aware that a number of materials are banned from disposal in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) bans easy-to-recycle materials (like cardboard) from the trash. 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 on waste bans](#).

Restaurants 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. 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



RECYCLING CARDBOARD

More than 80% of all MassDEP waste ban enforcement is for cardboard! Clean cardboard is a readily recyclable material with well-established markets for processing. See the RecyclingWorks website for information on [how cardboard is recycled](#).

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). Businesses often save money on disposal fees when recycling cardboard.

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. Restaurants that collect food scraps for composting may be able to combine soiled cardboard and waxed cardboard with the food waste. Consult your hauler to find out if this is an option.

RECYCLING BOTTLES & CANS

Next to paper, bottles and cans are the most commonly-recycled materials in the United States. However, a 2018 study from the National Restaurant Association reveals that less than 30% of restaurants recycle these items. This category includes glass, plastic, and metal/aluminum containers. These bottles and cans, which are also banned from disposal in Massachusetts, are easily recyclable, composed of valuable materials, and have established markets and infrastructure for recycling. See the RecyclingWorks website for additional information about [recycling bottles and cans](#).



Discuss options for collecting these containers with your hauler. This could include mixed container collection or co-collection with paper and cardboard.

DIVERTING FOOD WASTE FROM DISPOSAL

Food material is typically the largest single component of waste generated by most restaurants and diverting this material from disposal may 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-half ton or more of food waste per week to divert that waste from disposal. Use the [Food Waste Estimation Guide](#) on the RecyclingWorks website to anticipate whether it is likely that your operations' food waste exceeds the ban threshold.

Restaurants subject to the Massachusetts commercial organics waste ban should separate food scraps from trash and recycling. Food scrap collection strategies will vary based on a restaurant's available space, layout, and hauler requirements. Collecting scraps from prep stations using designated and frequently-emptied containers helps to reduce contamination and prevent pests or odors. In self-service restaurants, 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. See the RecyclingWorks website for more information about the [array of options available to recover food waste](#).



Many businesses have found that diverting their recycling and food scraps is either cost-neutral or helps save money, by reducing disposal costs. The following case studies demonstrate how diverting recycling and food scraps can help improve operations in a restaurant setting:

- [Gardner Ale House Video Case Study](#)
- [Northampton Brewery Written Case Study](#)
- [Johnny's Luncheonette Video and Written Case Study](#)
- [Lenox Hotel Video and Written Case Study](#)

1. https://conserve.restaurant.org/Downloads/PDFs/2018_Sustainability_FINAL_small.aspx

HOW TO COMPLY

Identify what waste ban materials your business regularly disposes of and work with your hauler to set up or improve your business' recycling program for those materials.

KNOW YOUR WASTE

You may not know exactly what materials are in your business' trash bins. Take a look in your waste barrels and dumpsters to learn what waste ban items your business regularly throws away.

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. Watch the [RecyclingWorks Kitchen Source Separation Instructional Video](#) for tips on training your staff on how to collect food scraps separately from trash. For more information on working effectively with your hauler to set up a recycling or composting program, see the 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 and food waste diversion
- Comply with Massachusetts waste ban regulations
- Find haulers and processors of recyclable materials
- Provide employee training and signage
- Save money on waste removal

