

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

The Center for EcoTechnology (CET) developed this original document under contract to MassDEP as part of MassDEP's RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts program. This was developed in collaboration with businesses, institutions, waste haulers, handling facilities, municipal officials, and industry associations. It was developed through a series of stakeholder discussions and interviews with waste haulers.

This tip sheet is intended to provide guidelines for businesses and institutions to help set up contracts for hauling trash, recyclables, and/or organics, effectively manage these services, and adjust contracts. The guidance is organized into four topic areas that emerged through the stakeholder process:

- Know Your Waste
- Create and Adjust Contracts
- Comply with Waste Disposal Bans and Other Regulations
- Communicate Effectively

Know Your Waste

Often, businesses do not know exactly what they are throwing away. 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. If your business serves food, you may want to consider organics collection (commonly referred to as composting).

- Look into barrels and dumpsters to get a rough sense of the type and volume of what 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 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](#).
- Estimate your food waste if your business serves food. The RecyclingWorks [Estimation Guide](#) can help determine the quantity of food waste your facility generates.

Create and Adjust Contracts

When creating, modifying, and renewing contracts, knowing what services your hauler offers can ensure that your contract provides the services that match your business needs. Here are some things to discuss when contracting for service with a waste hauler:

■ Creating contracts

◆ Service Costs

- Initial charges, such as capital investment.
- Hauling and tonnage or flat rate pickup charges.
- Surcharges such as container rental, fuel/environmental, container delivery/removal, extra pickups, waste ban contamination, etc.
- Clearly communicate any pickup scheduling restrictions to your hauler.

- Evaluate cost differential between scheduled and on-call services.

◆ Container Sizes and Types

- Hauler may provide compactors, dumpsters, or carts.
- “Right size” your collection containers and collection frequency to optimize diversion and service efficiency. Check containers just before they are emptied to assess capacity needs.
- Clarify who is responsible for cleaning and maintaining collection containers.

◆ Handling Contamination and Rejected Loads

- If your business does not separate materials into the correct containers, this can cause contamination issues. For instance, if plastic bags are mixed in with food scraps in an organics bin.
- Ask how the hauler will notify your business if there are contamination issues and when will they reject a load due to contamination.
- What are the charges and procedure for a rejected load?
- Make sure the hauler knows the best contact at your business to reach out to if there are contamination issues.

◆ Hauler Reporting

- Reports provide you with data on the volume or weight of materials that your hauler collects.
- Ask how frequently you will receive reports and what information they will contain.
- Reports may include recommendations for improving your program. More detailed reporting can help you improve program efficiency.

◆ Invoicing

- Look at each line item to understand what you are paying for.
- If you do not understand any of the charges, ask your hauler about them.
- Request unbundled pricing or, if pricing is bundled, request a breakdown in order to compare economic incentives for diversion.

◆ Contract Terms

- Contracts are typically for a three-year term, but you should discuss options with your hauler.
- Many contracts automatically renew, so be aware of your renewal date.

■ Making adjustments to existing contracts:

- ◆ Service level changes can occur mid-contract as business needs change.
- ◆ Adjustments can include diverting new materials, changing sizes of containers, and changing pickup schedules.
- ◆ Know what services your hauler can provide and how you can make changes during the contract term.

■ **Sub-contracting:**

◆ If you request a service that your hauler doesn't provide, the hauler may choose to subcontract for that service, or they may ask you to seek alternate options on your own. This is particularly relevant for materials such as organics, electronics, or hazardous waste.

- The advantage to sub-contracting is you only have one waste hauling contract to manage. However, it is important to ensure that your hauler communicates effectively with the subcontractor on any service concerns.
- Working with a subcontractor through your primary hauler may cost less than working directly with the subcontractor, if your hauler has a bulk rate for their services.
- In other cases subcontracting may come at a cost premium, but it provides ease for you as the customer compared with managing two separate 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.

Comply with Waste Disposal Bans and Other Regulations

Your business, your waste hauler, and disposal sites are all responsible for properly handling waste according to local, state, and federal regulations. This includes national, third-party subcontractors and/or waste brokers you may work with. Many businesses are not aware that their states may have banned a number of materials from disposal. For instance, Massachusetts bans easy-to-recycle materials (like cardboard) and toxic materials (like lead acid batteries) from disposal. In addition, your municipality may have additional bylaws/ordinances or regulations requiring businesses to recycle.

It is important to be aware of the waste bans and regulations, and to properly separate materials to comply with these bans.

■ **Waste ban materials vary by state but may include:**

- Recyclable Paper and Cardboard
- Glass/Aluminum/Metal/Plastic Containers
- Leaves and Yard Waste
- Food Waste

■ **Additional resources for information on regulations and ordinances:**

- [Materials Guidance](#) for specific information on recyclables.
- Check with your City/Town Public Works Department or Board of Health regarding local requirements.

Communicate Effectively

Just having a recycling program in place does not ensure people will participate. Ask your waste hauler how they plan to handle your trash, recycling, and organics. Understanding where materials go and how they are processed has been proven to help increase participation in programs to separate recyclables and food scraps, 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. Discuss hauling options and waste materials when requesting service, continually manage and evaluate the program, and revisit contract agreements when necessary.

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 a key to working together effectively. 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 communication:

■ **Signage, containers, and training**

- ◆ Request signs to label trash, recycling, and organics collection containers that reflect the specific needs and waste materials at your facility.
- ◆ Clearly designate containers by shape, color, and lid opening configuration to optimize diversion.
- ◆ Regular training for staff is key to an effective program.

■ **Regular reporting on tonnage and service levels**

- ◆ Ask your hauler how and when reporting will occur and what information they will report to you.
- ◆ If dumpster or cart weights are estimated rather than measured, these estimates should be checked periodically as your waste stream may change over time.
- ◆ You and your hauler should jointly monitor and communicate about fullness of dumpsters, compactors, and carts, and make service adjustments if necessary.

■ **Feedback on contamination**

- ◆ Ask your hauler to routinely inspect containers to identify contamination and provide feedback quickly.
- ◆ Make sure your hauler knows the best contact at your business to receive and respond to feedback on contamination and service levels. Contamination is best clarified with photos.

■ **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.

■ Request CET assistance

◆ If your business would like help improving your recycling program, use [Center for EcoTechnology](#) (CET) as a resource.

- CET can work with businesses and haulers to implement a program, including training, signage, and explanation of the waste bans.
- To request assistance, contact CET at (888) 813-8552 or wastedfood@cetonline.org.

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