

Universal Recycling

Summary Sheet

**Why is the law needed?**

Waste diversion rates have stagnated in Vermont between 30 to 36% over the past 10 years. A significant portion of the waste stream that is disposed is composed of recyclable items, leaf and yard debris, and food scraps that could be diverted from landfills and put to better use. In addition, landfilling these materials (especially food scraps) contributes to climate change by producing greenhouse gas emission. Recyclable materials, food scraps, and leaf and yard debris are all valuable resources that should not be thrown away. Finally, landfill space in Vermont is limited and one of the two major landfills is nearing its capacity.

What is the goal of Universal Recycling?

The goal of Universal Recycling is to improve the capture and diversion rates for these valuable materials to prevent them from being landfilled. When the law takes full effect more materials will be diverted from the landfill. It has been demonstrated that recycling materials conserves resources while reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. The bans established by Act 148 send clear signals to both the private and public sector that materials will be available, which provides an incentive to invest in infrastructure needed to meet the demand.

What does the Universal Recycling law do?

This law will provide **convenience and choices** to Vermont residents and businesses, and it will lead to more **consistent statewide solid waste services such as recycling and composting**. By requiring separation and diversion of materials it creates an incentive for investment into materials management strategies. It also **allows for time** to establish collection and facilities for managing recyclables and food, leaf, and yard materials. In summary the law:

- **Bans disposal of certain solid waste from landfills including:**
 - Recyclables by July 1, 2015 including:
 - Aluminum and steel cans
 - Aluminum foil and aluminum pie pans
 - Glass bottles and jars from food and beverages
 - PET and HDPE plastic containers, bottles and jugs
 - Corrugated cardboard
 - White and mixed paper
 - Newspaper, magazines, paper mail, and envelopes
 - Box board
 - Paper bags
 - Leaf and yard debris and clean wood waste by July 1, 2016, and
 - Food scraps by 2020, initiated in phases (see below).
- **Requires parallel collection at facilities:** Facility owners that offer trash collection must also offer collection of:
 - Recyclables by July 1, 2014,
 - Leaf and yard debris by July 1, 2015, and
 - Food scraps by July 1, 2017.



Facilities cannot charge a separate fee for the collection of residential recyclables, but can charge commercial haulers for collection of recyclables. The costs of collecting recyclables from residents can be included in trash collection fees. Facilities can charge for the collection of leaf and yard debris and food scraps.

- **Requires parallel collection at curbside:** Haulers that offer services for managing trash must also offer services for managing:
 - Recyclables by July 1, 2015,
 - Leaf and yard debris by July 1, 2016, and
 - Food scraps by July 1, 2017.

Haulers cannot charge a separate fee for the collection of residential recyclables. The costs of collecting recyclables from residents can be included in trash collection fees. Haulers can charge for the collection of leaf and yard debris, and food scraps.

- Allows ANR to oversee facility and hauler residential rate structures to ensure that rates are transparent to residential consumers.

- Includes a **food recovery hierarchy**:
 1. Reduction at the source
 2. Rescuing quality food for people
 3. Diversion for agricultural uses, including as food for animals*
 4. Composting, nutrient management, & anaerobic digestion
 5. Energy recovery



* See VT Agency of Agriculture Policy on Swine Feeding:

<http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/solid/documents/SwineFeedingPolicy.pdf>

- **Phased in food scrap diversion:** Larger food scrap generators are targeted to divert their food scraps if a certified facility is **within 20 miles** (phased-in by amount generated over time):
 - July 1, 2014 for generators of more than 104 tons/year (2 tons/week)
 - July 1, 2015 for generators of more than 52 tons/year (1 ton/week)
 - July 1, 2016 for generators of more than 26 tons/year (1/2 ton/week)
 - July 1, 2017 for generators of more than 18 tons/year (~1/3 ton/week)
 By 2020, all food scraps, including those from households, must be diverted with no exemption for distance.
- Provides incentives to reduce waste by requiring municipalities to implement **variable rate pricing (aka Pay As You Throw)** for materials collected from residential customers based on volume or weight, by July 1, 2015. Haulers are also required to utilize variable rate pricing systems in accordance with the specific ordinances and rules that are implemented by municipal entities (including solid waste districts, towns, town groups, and alliances).
- Provides more recycling options by requiring recycling containers to be located in public buildings and publically owned or controlled land (municipal and state) wherever trash cans are located (except in bathrooms) by July 1, 2015; requires the State House to implement a similar program by July 2012.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Department of Environmental Conservation

Waste Management & Prevention Division, Solid Waste Program
1 National Life Drive, Davis 1, Montpelier, VT 05620-3704

(802) 828-1138

www.recycle.vermont.gov