Food Separation Guidance

The Center for EcoTechnology (CET) developed this original document under contract to MassDEP as part of MassDEP's RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts program. Through the RecyclingWorks program, CET worked with local health officials to develop Best Management Practices (BMPs) to support and inform oversight of commercial food waste collection programs. These BMPs, developed by health officials for health officials, are intended to provide general consensus for acceptable andling, storage and hauling of this material, and to assist Health Agents that may be unfamiliar with food waste separation for composting. A draft document was shared with representatives of all of the major public health organizations in Massachusetts, with a chance to provide additional comments.

Kitchen Separation

Recommended practices for source separation, starting in the kitchen

Hauler Collection Frequencies

Suggested timelines for hauler collection of food waste

Outdoor Storage Practices

Guidelines for proper storage, from cleanliness to container maintenance

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wastedfood.cetonline.org

I. Kitchen Separation

Source separation of food scraps starts in kitchens and dish rooms.

Recommended back of the house practices are as follows:

- **Kitchen food scraps** should be collected in dedicated receptacles such as bowls, buckets and barrels in the same area as trash is currently collected.
- **Containers** should be leak proof (impervious) and covered when not in continuous use, or when full. They must be intended only for the purpose of food scraps collection and clearly marked.
- **Food scraps** should be collected and removed from the kitchen/dish room at the same frequency as trash is removed from these areas.

Back of the house practices are dependent on the volume produced. Collection at the same frequency as trash is reasonable for most establishments and seasons; in others, food waste should be collected as often as necessary to keep the area sanitary and to prevent odor, vermin and vector harborage. At a minimum, collection should be every shift. Once collected, food scraps will be brought to a storage area near the trash dumpster/compactor where the hauler will pick up the material.

View the following instructional video featuring University of Massachusetts-Amherst to learn more about source separation of food scraps.

II. Hauler Collection & Frequencies

As a rule, food scraps should be collected by the haulers at a frequency that minimizes odor, insects, vectors and other pests. Collection frequency will vary based on hauler routes, truck capabilities, collection container types, and site specific generation rate of these materials. In some cases, variations on the below recommended practices should be agreed upon between the Health Department, food establishment and hauler.

Dumpsters and Carts:

64 gallon wheeled carts (known as toters) and dumpsters of 2, 4, 6, and 8 yard sizes.

- In summer (April-September) it is recommended that food scraps collected in toters or dumpsters be hauled away for processing twice per week.
- In winter (October-March) it is recommended that food scraps collected in toters or dumpsters be hauled away for processing once per week.

Certain situations may dictate the need for more frequent removal, such as proximity of the collection container to other establishments and the type of food waste generated. Most establishments will be fine with a 2x/weekly collection, while high-odor generators such as seafood restaurants may need to collect more frequently. Food waste should be collected as often as necessary to prevent a nuisance.

Compactors:

Usually 20 yards or more, compactors are used by large food waste generators that also have the space to site a container of this size at their facility. A self-contained compactor typically has a chute with a door leading from a loading dock or from the inside of a building to feed it and has no area open to the air.

- In summer (April-September), it is recommended that food waste collected in compactors be hauled away for processing once per week.
- In winter (October-March) it is recommended that food waste collected in compactors be hauled away for processing once per week.

Location of the compactor relative to sun exposure may affect hauling need frequency. The condition of the compactor should be checked regularly for leaks or rusting. If the compactor has an open chute leading directly from the inside of the building, odors may create problems inside the establishment. Compactors should be emptied as often as necessary to keep the area clean, sanitary and free of odors and insects. Extending the time frequency of pick up should be agreed upon by the establishment, hauler and health department.

III. Outdoor Storage Practices

Type and location of containers will vary. There is also considerable variability in local trash area requirements and space availability, especially between dense urban centers and less dense or space constrained areas.

1. **Storage:** Outdoor storage surfaces should be nonabsorbent (concrete or asphalt), smooth, and durable and sloped to drain. Some communities require trash/recycling areas to be fenced in or otherwise out of view. It is best for businesses/institutions to check with the local Health Department to determine if this is required. The storage area must be maintained in good repair, clearly marked with no-parking signs, easily cleanable and if necessary/possible, enclosed by fencing to contain wind-blown litter. No food debris, residue should be outside of the containers, and no unnecessary items should clutter the storage area.

1. **Container Maintenance:** Dumpsters, carts or compactors should be closable and cleanable, leak-free, water tight and capable of being locked. All doors/hatches/tight-fitting lids should be closed or in place when not in immediate use to prevent pests from entering the container. Plastic bags and wet strength paper bags may be used to line closed outside receptacles.

1. **Cleanliness:** Carts, dumpsters, compactors and other bins should be cleaned often enough to prevent odor and other pest/vector attractions. High pressure pumps, hot water, steam and detergent are cleaning materials that should be used as necessary.

Food Transportation

Different types of food have different transportation needs. Canned and shelf-stable foods have different transportation needs than temperaturecontrolled foods. Speak with your local health board and food rescue organizations to ensure that food is being transported appropriately. Keep transportation logs to ensure that food is arriving at the donation location in the same condition it left your facility. The form to the right is an example of a transportation log that can be used to ensure that food is transported safely and appropriately. For more information on transporting food for donation, see pages 28-30 of the Comprehensive Guidelines for Food Recovery Programs.

Resources

There are many resources and organizations available to find further information and assistance with setting up a food donation program in your area. Below is a list of national food donation organizations and resources. In addition, view 'Your State Page' to find state specific information regarding food rescue and donation.

Food Donation Organizations

- Feeding America
- Food Donation Connection
- Food Recovery Network

Searchable list of smaller agencies (soup kitchens and food pantries): Find a Food Pantry

Documents and Laws

Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic Fact Sheets

- Connecticut Legal Fact Sheets
- Massachusetts Legal Fact Sheets
- Rhode Island Legal Fact Sheets
- Vermont Legal Fact Sheets

Comprehensive Guidelines for Food Recovery Programs

- FDA Food Code 2013
- Food Recovery: a legal guide
- ServSafe Food Safety Training

If you are a business/institution interested in hearing more about starting a food recovery program, contact the Center for EcoTechnology at (888) 813-8552 or wastedfood@cetonline.org.

CET CENTER FOR ECOTECHNOLOGY

The Center for EcoTechnology (CET) helps people and businesses save energy and reduce waste. CET acts as a catalyst to accelerate the development of a vibrant marketplace to divert wasted food from the commercial and institutional sectors. We have been a leader in the wasted food reduction and diversion movement for more than 20 years, implementing some of the first wasted food composting programs in the country, and contributing to effective public policy.

We believe that better managing wasted food is critical in order to address climate change, feed more hungry people, and grow our economy. If you are a city, state or federal agency, industry group or foundation, and want to tackle the issue of wasted food, please contact us!

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