

# **Recycling Rule Revision: Changes for Responsible Units**

Jennifer Semrau

July 15, 2025

# Overview

- Scope included NR 500, 502, 520, 542, 544
- **Focus today on RU Revisions**
- Additional changes for MRFs, haulers, transfer and storage facilities
- Slides represent summary of revisions. To view complete rule revision go to [Wisconsin Legislature: CR 23-065 Rule Text](#).

# Rule Revision Timeline



# **What does recycling code revision NOT cover?**

---

How Responsible Units (RUs) are defined  
(each local government, unless alternative RU established)

---

---

Which materials are banned from landfill  
disposal and which materials RUs are  
required to provide collection for

---

---

How the recycling grant is distributed and  
due date of recycling grant application

---

---

Above items are defined in statute, Ch. 287, Wis. Stats.

---

# RU Education

- Prior – RUs required to have an education program addressing lead acid batteries, major appliances, oil, yard waste, tires, cans/bottles paper/cardboard, for residential, multi-family and non-residential properties. 2009 electronics law added electronics.
- New – Clarifications/Additions
  - Review education for accuracy and distribute annually
  - Add oil filters/absorbents, batteries and food waste/compost
  - Eliminate requirements for “program start up” and “consumer and youth education”

# RU Education

- Goals
  - Ensure recycling information is accurate and up-to-date; reduce contamination rates at MRFs.
  - Reduce fires in trucks and facilities from improperly disposed batteries
  - Reduce the amount of food waste, yard waste and other organic materials going to landfills (food waste comprises over 20% of landfilled waste).
- Additional Details
  - RUs should review website or printed materials for accuracy each year; could use your MRF as a resource.
  - Free resources at [Recycling education and outreach | Wisconsin DNR](#)
  - RUs do NOT need to collect or create programs for oil filters and absorbents or batteries, reducing food waste, or composting.

# DNR Education Resources

## HOME COMPOSTING

Reap A Heap Of Benefits



Wisconsin Department  
of Natural Resources  
PUB-WA-072  
2024

## HOME COMPOSTING MATERIALS

**COMPOST**

**Carbon-Rich "Browns"**

- Brown leaves & yard waste
- Brush & twigs (1/2" in diameter or less)
- Cardboard (dry and clean)
- Egg cartons (shredded)
- Newspaper
- Nuts & nut shells (but not black walnuts)
- Paper towels
- Pine cones & pine needles
- Sawdust & shavings (from non-treated wood)
- Straw & hay
- Wood chips

**Nitrogen-Rich "Greens"**

- Green leaves & yard waste
- Coffee beans, grounds & used filters
- Dirt & potting soil
- Egg shells
- Flowers & yard plants
- Fruit, including cores & rinds
- Grass clippings
- Gourds & pumpkins
- Melons and melon rinds
- Tea leaves & tea bags
- Vegetables, greens & legumes

**COMPOST TIP**

Chopping or shredding these items helps speed up the composting process.

For best results, composters can mix in 2 to 3 volumes of "brown" material with each volume of "green" material.

**NOT FOR COMPOST**

**Not for Home Composting**

- Biodegradable forks, spoons & knives
- Branches or logs more than 6" in diameter
- Charcoal briquettes or briquette ash
- Cigar & cigarette ashes
- Coffee or beverage cups
- Diapers
- Dairy products (butter, milk, cheese, etc.)
- Invasive weeds and plants
- Meat (cooked or raw) & bones
- Oils, greases & fats (including snack chips)
- Pet food
- Pet or human waste
- Pizza boxes with grease or cheese on them
- Recyclables (glass, plastic, metal cans, etc.)
- Sawdust from treated wood
- Trash (wrappers, packaging, etc.)
- Used take-out containers & Styrofoam shells
- Wood treated with varnish or paint

For more, visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) & search "compost," or consult other DNR publications, **Home Composting: Reap A Heap Of Benefits & Home Composting: The Basic Composter.**

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment, programs, services and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have questions, please write to Equal Opportunity Office, Department of Natural Resources, 201 North Monroeville, Madison, WI 53705. This publication is available in alternative format (large print, Braille, audiocassette, etc.) upon request. Please call 608-260-2171 for more information. 989-1702-0017

## REDUCING FOOD WASTE AT HOME

Food waste and scraps make up the largest part of trash in Wisconsin landfills. When food goes in the trash, so do resources, time and money.

Reducing food waste helps save resources used to produce, store and distribute the food. It also cuts greenhouse gas emissions from food decomposing in landfills.

The Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) 2020-2021 Statewide Waste Characterization Study found that food waste made up 20% of trash going to Wisconsin landfills. This amounts to approximately 854,000 tons annually, or 294 pounds per person in Wisconsin during the study period. The study estimated that more than three-quarters of this food could have been consumed by people.



Buckets of food waste and scraps for composting. Photo Credit: DNR

## Household Battery Recycling

Batteries power many items we use in our daily lives, and can pile up when they are no longer useful. This guide provides an overview of requirements and explains how to safely store and dispose of common types of household batteries.

### Battery recycling requirements for households

Wisconsin has no legal requirements, with the exception of lead-acid batteries, for disposal of household-generated batteries. These include alkaline, lithium, lithium ion, metal hydride, nickel-cadmium, silver oxide and zinc-air. Batteries come in many sizes and can be rechargeable or single use. The Department of Natural Resources recommends recycling many battery types by taking them to a drop-off site. Batteries should never go in household recycling bins. For more information, review the chart on the back of this publication, or go to [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search "batteries."

### Household battery recycling locations

**Lead-acid batteries**, or "automotive type batteries," are banned from disposal. Consumers may bring lead-acid batteries to any Wisconsin retailer that sells these batteries for recycling. This service is free to customers who buy a new battery. Customers may be charged a fee if they bring in a used battery without buying a new one. For drop-off locations that accept **other battery types**, visit [WisconsinRecyclingDirectory.com](http://WisconsinRecyclingDirectory.com) or [Call2Recycle.org](http://Call2Recycle.org) or contact your local recycling program. Some sites may charge a fee or accept only certain battery types.

**Electronics with rechargeable batteries banned from Wisconsin landfills and incinerators**

Cellphones  
Laptops  
Tablets  
Computer peripherals  
Other portable electronics with screens

Visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), search "recycle" for a full list of banned electronics and to find collection sites or mail-back programs.

## Know the risk: how to prepare and store batteries for recycling

Many batteries, especially lithium ion, pose a fire risk due to their chemistries and ability to hold a charge. Batteries can spark and start a fire if their terminals touch metal or each other. The following recommendations can lower the risk of fire.

- Put each battery in an individual, clear plastic bag, or tape each battery's terminals with clear packing tape.
- Store batteries in a non-metal container.
- Store swollen or damaged batteries in sand or kitty litter.
- Keep battery labels visible.
- Take stored batteries to a drop-off location frequently.



Single-use alkaline batteries have little recycling value and may be safely thrown in the trash.

## ¿Qué equipos electrónicos puedo reciclar a través de E-Cycle Wisconsin?

Los hogares de Wisconsin y las escuelas públicas K-12 pueden reciclar equipos electrónicos a través del programa E-cycle Wisconsin. Se aceptan los siguientes equipos electrónicos para E-cycle Wisconsin. Muchos lugares de recolección también aceptan otros elementos. Para encontrar un lugar de recolección o programa de devolución por correo, visite [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) y busque "e-cycle".



## CONFUSED BY DATE LABELS ON FOODS? WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

One reason for food waste is when consumers or retailers throw away wholesome food because they are confused about the dates on the labels. Except for infant formula, dates do not reflect the product's safety and are not required by federal law. Manufacturers provide dates to help consumers and retailers decide when food is of the best quality.

# DNR Education Resources

## Key webpages

- [Recycling motor oil, oil filters and other automotive products | | Wisconsin DNR](#)
- [Proper handling of used batteries | | Wisconsin DNR](#)
- [Reducing Food Waste at Home | | Wisconsin DNR](#)
- [Composting in Wisconsin | | Wisconsin DNR](#)
- RUs can simply link to DNR pages above to meet new education requirements for oil filters/absorbents, batteries and food waste/compost.

# Collection Requirements

- Prior – RUs with population of 5,000 or more, curbside collection at least monthly; RUs with population of less than 5,000 provide drop-off open at least 2 days/month for 5 hours/day (min. 10 hrs/mon)
- New - Clarifications/Additions
  - If minimum monthly collection, must provide access to a drop-off
  - If RU opts to direct individual residents to contract directly with a hauler for collection of recyclables it must modify its recycling ordinance and compliance assurance plan to reflect this requirement and collect recycling tonnage data
  - Eliminate specified pounds/person collection standard

# Collection Requirements

- Goals
  - Ensure sufficient/overflow recycling access
  - Ensure all residents are recycling in individual subscription situations; increase RU oversight
  - Replace stagnant collection standards with goals to improve diversion
- Additional Details
  - Drop-off access could be in another community or at a private location
  - RUs will still provide tonnage data in RU annual report
  - Grant funding amount is NOT directly tied to tonnage collected or meeting collection standard (RU must have “effective recycling program”).

# Recycling Ordinance Modifications: Multi-Family Recycling

- Prior - Multi-family properties need to provide “adequate, separate containers” for recycling. No additional detail on “adequate.”
- New – Clarifications/Additions
  - Providing adequate recycling services to multi-family properties must include an equal or greater ratio of recycling containers to trash containers and one of the following:
    - minimum total volume of recycling provided is 20 gallons/week per dwelling unit;
    - ratio of trash container volume to recycling container volume is at most 2:1; or
    - an alternative method which does not result in recyclable container overflow between collection.

# Recycling Ordinance Modifications: Multi-Family Recycling

- Goals
  - Reduce RU challenges with enforcing ordinance
  - Reduce confusion at some multi-family properties
  - Increase recycling access at multi-family properties
- Additional Details
  - RUs will need to modify their recycling ordinance. DNR has new [recycling ordinance template](#). **RUs strongly encouraged to use template.**
  - Email new recycling ordinances to [DNRRecycling@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNRRecycling@wisconsin.gov).
  - RUs will not be required to proactively enforce (do not need to notify multi-family properties).

# Recycling Ordinance Modifications: Non-Residential Recycling

- Prior – Non-residential properties need to provide “adequate, separate containers” for recycling. No additional detail on “adequate.”
- New – Clarifications/Additions
  - Providing adequate recycling services to non-residential properties requires that the total volume of recycling containers be sufficient to avoid overflow during the time period between collection of materials and delivery to a recycling facility.

# Recycling Ordinance Modifications: Non-Residential Recycling

- Goals
  - Ensure sufficient recycling access/volumes at non-residential properties
- Additional Details
  - Non-residential properties vary significantly in recycling generation. Therefore, “adequate” could not be as specifically described as for multi-family residences.
  - RUs will need to modify their recycling ordinance. DNR has new [recycling ordinance template](#). **RUs strongly encouraged to use template.**
  - Email new recycling ordinances to [DNRRecycling@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNRRecycling@wisconsin.gov).
  - RUs will not be required to proactively enforce (do not need to notify non-residential properties).

# Multi-Family & Non-Residential Tenant Notification Requirements

- Prior – Multi-family and non-residential properties required to provide written notification to tenants upon leasing and at least semi-annually thereafter of recycling program.
- New – Clarifications/Additions
  - Reduced notification requirements. Notification will no longer need to include reasons to reduce and recycle waste or specific details (hours of operation, contact person, address and phone number) for locations that accept recyclable materials not collected on-site.

# Multi-Family & Non-Residential Tenant Notification Requirements

- Goals
  - Focus notification requirements on how to properly recycle on-site
  - Reduce properties need to keep up to date information on off-site recycling
- Additional Details
  - RUs will need to modify their recycling ordinance. DNR will provide new recycling ordinance template. **RUs strongly encouraged to use template.**
  - Email new recycling ordinances to [DNRRecycling@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNRRecycling@wisconsin.gov).
  - RUs will not be required to proactively enforce (do not need to notify multi-family and non-residential properties).

# Changes for Haulers That Affect RUs

- Requires containers used for collection of recyclables to be clearly labeled.
- Requires haulers to provide residential recycling tonnage data to RUs by Feb. 1 each year. Data must include the name of the materials recovery facility(ies) (MRFs) used to process the materials.
- Requires haulers to notify RUs when a new MRF is used.

# Hauler Tonnage Data Reporting to RUs

- Prior – Haulers are required to provide contracted RUs with recycling tonnage data within 4 weeks of a written request.
- New
  - Haulers to provide residential (single family and 2-4 unit) recycling tonnage information to all RUs, with or without a contract by Feb. 1.
  - Data would include name of Material Recovery Facility(ies) used.
  - If scale weights unavailable (mixed loads), estimated weights acceptable.
  - Haulers required to notify RUs of any change MRF(s) used within one week.

# Hauler Tonnage Data Reporting to RUs

- Goals
  - Ease the recycling data collection process for RUs, make it automatic.
  - Reduce the work (phone calls and emails) for RUs and haulers in trying to attain this information.
- Additional Details
  - RUs will receive one recycling tonnage figure, not broken out by material.
  - RUs will maintain this information and submit to the department on the annual report.
  - If a RU is notified that a hauler is using a new MRF, the RU is responsible to ensure the MRF is self-certified (RUs must use self-certified MRF). List of self-certified MRFs is available [online](#).

# Changes for MRFs That Affect RUs

- Requires MRFs provide contracted RUs with information on accepted materials.
- Requires MRFs to review educational material within 60 days of a request from a contracted RU.

# Looking Ahead

- DNR currently focusing on educating affected entities (RUs, MRFs, haulers, etc.) of rule changes
- Soft roll-out of changes
  - RUs begin implementing new education requirements by Dec. 31, 2025.
  - RUs update recycling ordinances by April 30, 2026.
  - For RUs impacted by collection requirement changes, establish access to a drop-off by Jan. 1, 2026.
  - For RUs only using individual subscription service, update recycling ordinance and compliance assurance plan by April 30, 2026.

# CONNECT WITH US

---

## Questions?

Jennifer Semrau

Waste Reduction & Diversion Coordinator

[Jennifer.Semrau@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Semrau@wisconsin.gov)

608-381-0960



@WIDNR



@WI\_DNR



/WIDNRTV



"WILD WISCONSIN:  
OFF THE RECORD"