

Ask the Recycling Specialist

*What to expect from an RU
recycling program evaluation*

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What is an RU Program Evaluation?

An **RU Program Evaluation** is a site-specific investigation of the overall program operation of a single RU, although on occasion the evaluation is done simultaneously with two or three neighboring RUs. The DNR regional recycling specialist will work one-on-one with the RU representative to review program operations and documentation with a focus on improving program operation and efficiency. The RU evaluation may include a site visit to the RU drop-off location, processing facility, or compost facility. It may also include a joint inspection of recycling at a local business location.

Why do DNR recycling specialists evaluate my recycling program?

DNR is required under state statutes to review at least 5% of responsible units (RUs) each year to ensure that programs and activities funded by state recycling grants meet the requirements for an approved effective recycling program [s. 287.23(2)(b), Stats]. RU program evaluations are one means we use to ensure that your responsible unit's effective recycling program is in compliance with current state regulations. We also use these as an opportunity to provide technical assistance and outreach on a variety of related topics, and as a means of facilitating networking among neighboring RUs.

When will my recycling program be evaluated?

Your program may be evaluated at any time, but your regional recycling specialist will notify you in advance of the visit. DNR's goal is to go beyond the statutory requirement and evaluate at a minimum 100 RU programs each year (20 per DNR region).

How is my program chosen for an evaluation?

Recycling specialists select RUs for an evaluation based on a number of criteria:

- ✓ Prior problems with your program (perhaps your responsible unit is or was on probation)
- ✓ Complaints from responsible unit residents or businesses
- ✓ Annual recycling program report data shows that your responsible unit is below the pounds-per-capita goals for recycling
- ✓ Information from your recycling grant indicates that your program's costs per ton were higher than expected
- ✓ Significant time has passed since the last evaluation
- ✓ Referral from another DNR employee
- ✓ Your program is exceptionally good and the specialist wants to learn from your success

How do I prepare for the recycling program evaluation?

- ✓ Be sure your responsible unit is in compliance with current regulations
- ✓ Keep your records and documents up-to-date and organized; make certain they are complete
- ✓ Assure proper handling of recyclables
- ✓ Have your recycling ordinance and compliance assurance plan (CAP) handy
- ✓ Periodically conduct self-evaluations and correct problems that arise immediately
- ✓ If you have questions, don't hesitate to call your regional recycling specialist

What happens during an Individual recycling program evaluation?

Evaluations are announced. The regional recycling specialist will call, email or write you a letter to schedule an appointment. On the day of the visit, you can expect a discussion with your recycling specialist on the procedures your responsible unit uses to collect, process and market your recyclables. The specialist may ask to review your processing and marketing records, visit any drop-off sites, walk through any facility you operate (such as a material recovery facility [MRF]) or observe a portion of curbside collection. The specialist will be interested in viewing your compliance assurance plan (CAP) and your local recycling ordinance, in addition to educational materials prepared for your residents and businesses. He/she may also want to visit a portion of the businesses and multi-family dwellings to gauge compliance at those entities.

The recycling specialist will also use this opportunity with you to discuss other topics. Examples of other topics include those listed below. If you have any topic you would like addressed, let your recycling specialist know.

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| ✓ Recycling Consolidation Grants | ✓ Special Events Recycling |
| ✓ Open and Illegal Burning | ✓ Managing RU program costs |
| ✓ RU Program Efficiency | ✓ Review of RU program basics |
| ✓ Hauler Relations | ✓ Non-Residential (Commercial Business) Recycling |

What happens after a program evaluation?

Follow up is dependent upon the results of the evaluation. After the evaluation, the recycling specialist will send you a letter or email outlining the results of the evaluation. If no problems or deficiencies are found, this communication may be your only record of the program evaluation. If the recycling program evaluation uncovered a problem or a weakness with the recycling program, the regional recycling specialist will work with you to resolve the problem or strengthen the program weaknesses by using a corrective action plan. Enforcement measures may be taken depending on the severity of the problem and the responsible unit's degree of cooperation in resolving the problem.

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