

# Fact Sheet: Large-Scale Composting of Food Residuals and Other Source-Separated Compostable Materials



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The new compost rule [June 1, 2012] allows a wider variety and greater quantity of food residuals to be accepted at licensed compost facilities. This document describes how operators of existing licensed vegetable food waste or yard residuals and clean chipped wood composting facilities can transition to source-separated compostable material (which includes non-vegetable food residuals) composting facilities.

Wisconsin's revised compost regulations (s. NR 502.12, Wis. Adm. Code) eliminated the Vegetable Food Compost category and created a new category of licensed composting facility – the *less than 5,000 cy Source-Separated Compostable Materials (SSCM) facility*. Source-separated compostable materials include food scraps and many other types of organic residuals (see definition below). Keeping the total amount of raw materials and compost at the site below 5,000 cy qualifies the facility for automatic exemptions from certain code requirements involving site design, operation and monitoring requirements that apply to larger facilities.

## Definition of Source-Separated Compostable Material

“Source-separated compostable material” means compostable materials that are separated from non-compostable material at the point of generation for use in composting and are kept separate from municipal solid waste. Source-separated compostable material includes: food residuals; farm and non-farm crop residues; botanical residuals; aquatic plants; vegetative food processing residues such as those from cannery and brewing activities; fish harvesting and processing residuals; yard residuals; farm and herbivorous animal manure, excluding deer and elk manure, and associated animal bedding; clean chipped wood; clean sawdust; non-recyclable compostable paper; and other similar materials approved in writing by the department. This term does not include biosolids, domestic wastewater, sewage sludge or septage, high-volume industrial waste, rendering or slaughterhouse wastes, animal carcasses, other solid waste or hazardous waste.

Facilities with less than 5,000 cy SSCM are subject to the following requirements for a DNR license:

**Note:** The same requirements apply to less than 20,000 cy yard residuals facilities, with the exception of those shown in **bold** font.

Requirement	Code Reference	Summary
Initial Site Inspection (new or expanding facilities only)	NR 502.04(2)	DNR inspection of proposed site for new or expanding facilities to confirm that location complies with location criteria and performance standards
Locational Criteria	NR 502.12(8)	Lists the minimum setbacks from surrounding resources and property lines
Performance Standards	NR 502.04(1)	Limits on water pollution, wetlands impacts, endangered species impacts, air emissions and emissions of explosive gases
<b>Approved Operating Plan</b>	<b>NR 502.12(13)</b>	<b>Lists the content of a facility operating plan required for DNR approval</b>
Design Standards	NR 502.12(11)	Lists facility sizing and construction features
Operating Standards	NR 502.12(10)	Lists material handling and process monitoring requirements
Recordkeeping	NR 502.12(15)(a)3	Maintain records on temperature and pile or windrow turning to document pathogen destruction
Stormwater	NR 502.12(15)(a)4	Visually inspect your facility for water discharge quality and performance of storm water controls
Reporting	NR 502.12(15)(b)	Fill out questions on annual DNR license renewal regarding quantities of compost produced
<b>Compost Testing (only if using raw manure)</b>	<b>NR 502.12(15)(a)(1)</b>	<b>Required lab tests on finished compost for pathogens and other contaminants</b>
Compost Use	NR 502.12(7)(f)	Finished compost may be applied to land or used for horticultural, landscaping or erosion control purposes
Closure Standards	NR 502.04(3)(a) and (b)	Required steps to take when closing the facility permanently

If you operate a less than 20,000 cy licensed yard residuals facility and you wish to begin accepting food scraps or other SSCMs for composting, or if you operate a less than 500 cy licensed vegetable food residual composting facility and you wish to continue accepting food scraps or other SSCMs for composting, you will need to take the following steps to obtain a license in the less than 5,000 cy SSCM category:

1. Determine if you intend to *convert* your licensed yard material facility to a SSCM facility (i.e., all yard materials will be mixed with food or other SSCMs), or if you wish to *add* a separate < 5,000 cy SSCM facility to your operation. If you are *adding* a food or other SSCM facility to your operation, you should follow steps 2-4 and then receive a separate license for the SSCM facility.
2. If you are adding a facility, or if your conversion plans will require a physical expansion of your facility, you must arrange for a DNR initial site inspection (ISI) of the property. To do that, first contact the [DNR solid waste specialist](#) for the county in which your facility is located. Then request, complete and return to the DNR contact person the Chapter NR 502 Non-Landfill Solid

Waste Facility ISI Application Form 4400-209: <https://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/forms/4400/4400-209.pdf>.

3. Develop an operating plan for your SSCM facility. Requirements for the plan are given in section NR 502.12(13), Wis. Adm. Code. Refer to *WA1586 Plan of Operation Submittal for Compost Facilities* <https://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/pubs/wa/wa1586.pdf> – for guidance on what to include in your submittal. Among the required components of the plan is a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). Use *WA1587 SWPPP Worksheet for Licensed Compost Sites that Submit Plans of Operation to DNR* <https://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/pubs/wa/wa1587.pdf> – to create a SWPPP.

Wisconsin professional environmental consulting firms provide services for developing plan of operation reports. The University of Wisconsin-Extension may be able to provide assistance in development of an operating plan. There are also numerous web-based resources that may be helpful in developing your plan, among them the [Cornell Waste Management Institute](#),

**Note:** For this type of facility, it is not necessary that a professional engineer certify your plan. However, you must include the information required in s. NR 502.13, Wis. Adm. Code.

4. Submit an application for a source-separated compostable material compost site using Composting Facility Plan of Operation Application Form 4400-282. Send it to the DNR solid waste specialist for the county in which your facility is located.

Contact [DNRWasteMaterials@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNRWasteMaterials@wisconsin.gov) for further information.

**Note:** SSCM facilities larger than 5,000 cy are subject to additional code requirements. This fact sheet is for less than 5,000 cy SSCM sites only.

Additional requirements also apply to facilities opting to produce Class A compost, a high-quality product that undergoes additional testing. See s. NR 502.12(16) for Class A compost requirements.

**Disclaimer:** *This document is intended solely as guidance and does not contain any mandatory requirements except where requirements found in statute or administrative rule are referenced. Any regulatory decisions made by the Department of Natural Resources in any matter addressed by this guidance will be made by applying the governing statutes and administrative rules to the relevant facts.*

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