

Tips for Responsible Units



Basic Requirements for RU Recycling Programs



This document summarizes the requirements to ensure RUs maintain an effective recycling program according to ch. NR 544, Wis. Adm. Code.

The six basic components are:

- A local recycling ordinance
- An education program
- A residential recycling collection and processing system
- A Compliance Assurance Plan (CAP)
- An annual report to DNR
- Notification to the DNR of program changes

Responsible units play an integral role in making Wisconsin a national leader in recycling. Our residents' strong support for recycling is based on your commitment to providing convenient and comprehensive recycling options to your communities. Here in Wisconsin, recycling is the law, but more importantly, it's what our residents expect.

Responsible Units and Wisconsin Law

Wisconsin law bans the disposal or incineration of many recyclable materials. It also requires municipalities to operate recycling programs in order to facilitate recycling throughout the state. Each municipality is designated as the local government recycling "responsible unit" (RU), unless they have entered into an agreement to become part of a consolidated RU, and must comply with the basic components to maintain its status as a DNR approved recycling program. The DNR seeks to ensure compliance through technical assistance and outreach efforts. To date, no RU program has been disqualified.

Recycling Means Business

Did you know that recycling not only conserves our resources, but also contributes to job creation and economic development in Wisconsin and all around the world? Each year, over 400,000 tons of residential recyclables are collected and processed in Wisconsin, which employs thousands of people in recycling-related activities throughout the state.

Wisconsin's recycling programs also support industry. They supply vital raw materials to companies in our state and all over the world. Manufacturers rely on the materials your community collects and recycles to make a wide variety of paper, metal and plastic based products. Producers are relying on **you** to keep their factories running and their people employed.



Six Components of an Effective RU Rec

“Recyclables” required to be collected refers to materials banned from landfills under s. 287.07(4):

- aluminum containers
- corrugated cardboard and other container board
- foam polystyrene packaging*
- glass containers
- magazines and newspapers
- #1 & #2 plastic bottles and jars**
- steel and bi-metal containers

Many RUs collect other materials for recycling in addition to these recyclables.

* currently exempted under state variance

**plastics # 3-7 currently exempted under state variance

See DNR publication *Wisconsin Recycles* for a complete list of banned materials

Once an RU is approved, there are six basic components necessary to maintain an effective program. This document summarizes the requirements to ensure RUs maintain an effective recycling program according to ch. NR 544, Wis. Adm. Code. Many programs exceed the minimum requirements.

- Remember that member municipalities of a consolidated RU must meet requirements not directly fulfilled by the RU.
- This document does not cover all the details in the law. If you have questions, refer to s. NR 544.04, Wis. Adm. Code or contact recycling program staff (contact information on the back side of this document).

1. Pass a local recycling ordinance with the following components:

- √ Requires residents to separate recyclables for recycling.
- √ Requires owners of multi-family housing and non-residential properties to:
 - Provide adequate containers for the collection of recyclables.
 - Inform tenants (upon leasing and semi-annually thereafter) what to recycle, where and how.
 - Ensure that those recyclables are taken to a recycling facility.
- √ Prohibits disposal of recyclables that have been separated for recycling.
- √ Contains provisions for enforcement that create the authority to verify compliance and assess penalties for non-compliance.

2. Have an education program that provides:

- √ Information on what recyclables are collected, where and how to recycle.
- √ Information on recycling or composting options for other materials banned from landfill disposal: lead acid batteries, major appliances, used oil, waste tires, yard materials and electronics.

3. Provide a program for collecting, processing and marketing recyclables from single family and 2-4 unit residences. This system may be operated directly or contracted for by the RU and must address all of the following:

- √ Recyclables are separated from solid waste.
- √ Recyclables maintain their marketable condition.
- √ RUs that don't provide or contract for collection service must be able to demonstrate that their residents have convenient access to privately contracted collection service.

The population of a municipality determines the collection system.

- **Urban municipalities - population of 5,000 or greater and average density of 70 persons per square mile:**
 - Collect at least 106.6 lbs of recyclables per person per year.
 - Provide curbside recycling that is picked up at least once a month.



Recycling Program

- **Rural municipalities - do not meet the population requirements for Urban:**

- Collect at least 82.4 lbs of recyclables per person per year.
- Provide a collection service that is curbside, drop-off, or a combination of the two. If drop-off service is provided, it shall be open at least 2 days each month for a minimum of 5 hours each day.

√ Verify with your hauler or materials recovery facility (MRF) that materials are processed in a DNR self-certified MRF.

4. Implement a Compliance Assurance Plan that:

- √ Describes the procedures to address at least one commonly encountered non-compliance issue with your recycling ordinance.
- √ Is updated as you encounter other non-compliance issues.

5. Submit an annual report to DNR by April 30 of each year reporting on your program and collection. Every RU must do this, whether or not they receive a recycling grant. Look for email reminders sent out early each year.

The following information should be tracked throughout the year so that it can be included in your annual report:

- √ Compliance issues:
 - The number of complaints received, inspections, citations and written or verbal warnings issued for residential and non-residential facilities.
- √ Weights of recyclables collected:
 - If you contract with a private hauler, the contract should stipulate that they report the tonnage of recyclables collected for you in time for the annual report submittal.
 - If one or more private haulers collect recyclables through household subscription services, you need to report tonnages they collect from single family and 2-4 unit residences. One option is to have a local ordinance requiring haulers working within an RU to report weights of recyclables collected.

6. Notify DNR of program changes by contacting the recycling program staff (see back for more info).

- √ Changes in contact information
 - This is essential so that you receive important notices regarding recycling grants and annual reports.
- √ Significant changes to your program such as:
 - Consolidation, or dissolution of a consolidation, with another RU.
 - Switch from providing collection service to requiring individual household subscription service.
 - Significant change to your recycling ordinance.



Resources

For additional information on recycling in Wisconsin, contact the DNR Waste and Materials Management Program at DNRRecycling@wisconsin.gov.

Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin

A nonprofit association of business, government, nonprofits and trade associations.

arow-online.org

(715) 343-0722

Recycle More Wisconsin

A program of the Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin, aims to bring together communities across Wisconsin with recycling education and outreach tools.

recyclemorewisconsin.org

(715) 347-5979

The Recycling Partnership

A nonprofit dedicated to providing grants, technical assistance, and tools to community recycling programs.

recyclingpartnership.org

info@recyclingpartnership.org

WasteCap Resources, Inc.

A nonprofit dedicated to providing waste reduction and recycling assistance for the benefit of business and the environment.

wastecap.org

wastecap@wastecap.org

(414) 961-1100

Wisconsin Recycling Markets Directory

A detailed directory of recyclers, haulers and contractors throughout the state. Enter the item you would like to recycle to see a list of recyclers in your area.

uwgb.edu/solid-hazardous-waste-education-center/



To download the poster above, as well as other outreach and educational materials:

dnr.wi.gov and search "recycling outreach"

For resources for responsible units, including a sample recycling ordinance and compliance assurance plan:

dnr.wi.gov and search "RU"

For more information on recycling in Wisconsin:

dnr.wi.gov and search "recycling"

Subscribe to Recycling Updates, as well as other waste-related newsletters at:

dnr.wi.gov and search "waste"

Contact us at DNRRecycling@wisconsin.gov



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