

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this guide is to clearly outline the requirements and recommendations for the collection and management of leaf, yard, and clean wood debris in accordance with Vermont's Universal Recycling law (Act 148) and the ANR Solid Waste Program rules.

**STATE GOALS**

**Conserve Resources:** Leaf, yard, and clean wood debris will soon be banned from disposal in solid waste or in landfills because they are valuable resources and can be put to better uses (compost, mulch, animal bedding, and energy recovery). At minimum, these materials can be managed in a way that reduces their negative impacts such as taking up landfill space and releasing greenhouse gas emissions as they degrade.

**Convenient Diversion & Use:** The goal is to make it easy and convenient for residents and businesses to recycle and divert these materials from the waste stream and to prioritize these materials for use in farming, landscaping (mulch etc.), composting, energy recovery, or other beneficial uses. Protecting the environment, public health, and prevention of nuisance conditions are additional goals for the successful management of these materials.

Since the goal is to provide convenient diversion and beneficial use opportunities, the Universal Recycling law requires transfer stations and solid waste haulers to offer collection options for these materials that meets the demand from customers in the area they serve.

**DEFINITIONS**

**Leaf and yard debris**, a.k.a. "leaf and yard residual" means source separated, compostable untreated vegetative matter, including grass clippings, leaves, kraft paper bags, and brush, which is free from non-compostable materials. It does not include such materials as pre- and postconsumer food residuals, food processing residuals, or soiled paper.

**Clean wood**, a.k.a. "wood waste" means trees, untreated wood, and other natural woody debris, including tree stumps, brush and limbs, root mats, and logs. The ANR Solid Waste Program considers untreated dimensional lumber as "untreated wood" as defined in clean wood and therefore banned from disposal in solid waste or in landfills July 1, 2016.

**Brush:** The ANR Solid Waste Program considers brush of 1 inch diameter or smaller to be leaf and yard debris. Brush that is larger than 1 inch is considered clean wood.

**REQUIREMENTS**

Leaf, yard and clean wood debris are banned from disposal "in solid waste or in landfills" as of July 1, 2016.

This means that these materials may not be thrown in the trash. They also may not be used as Alternative Daily Cover at a landfill (this would be construed as disposal "in landfills").

Clean wood (but not leaf and yard debris) *can* be burned at power plants like the McNeil Power Plant in Burlington, and can be burned at municipally owned facilities that have obtained Act 244 burn permits from the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR), Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Air Quality Division.

**Transfer Station Requirements:** As of **July 1, 2015**, transfer stations that accept solid waste (trash), must accept leaf and yard debris separate from other solid waste and deliver these materials to a location that manages leaf and yard debris consistent with the last three priority uses of the organics recovery hierarchy, including:

- Diversion for agricultural uses (such as mulch or animal bedding)
- Composting, Land application (such as mulch), or Anaerobic Digestion
- Energy Recovery

Transfer stations may charge customers for this service. Clean wood is *not* required to be collected by transfer stations.

This means that, at a minimum, transfer stations that accept trash must offer some leaf and yard debris collection service, such as a dumpster, a few containers (modified trash cans, rolling carts, or other containers property labeled for leaf and yard debris), or a managed pile approved in the facility's management plan.

Provided that a minimum level of leaf and yard debris collection service is offered, transfer stations may encourage customers (residents, businesses, institutions, and haulers) to utilize other sites for the drop-off and diversion of these materials. These other sites may include: composting facilities, stump dumps, farms, or other private or public lands.

Depending on the amount of material accepted, these other sites may require permits from the ANR Solid Waste Program to be in conformance with solid waste rules. Contact the ANR Solid Waste Program, Certification Section for information at (802) 828-1138.

Transfer station managers should also work with the ANR Solid Waste Program, Certification Section to amend their facility management plans to include the collection and management of leaf and yard debris and any other new materials they begin to collect. Visit the Universal Recycling facilities page here:

<http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/solid/URfacilities.htm> for guidance on amending management plans to accept organics.

Recycling centers that do not collect trash are not required to offer collection of leaf and yard debris.

**Hauler Requirements:** As of **July 1, 2016**, haulers that offer collection of solid waste must offer collection of leaf and yard debris separate from other solid waste, and deliver these materials to a location that manages leaf and yard debris in a manner consistent with the last three priority uses of the organics recovery hierarchy including:

- Diversion for agricultural uses (such as mulch or animal bedding)
- Composting, Land application, or Anaerobic Digestion
- Energy Recovery

Haulers may charge customers for this service. Haulers may also subcontract with another hauler who can provide these services to their customers.

**Frequency of Collection:** Haulers should collect leaf and yard debris, at a minimum 1-2 times per month in the spring and the fall, from approximately April 1st – May 30<sup>th</sup> and October 1st - November 30<sup>th</sup>. During summer months (June, July, and August) haulers should, at minimum, offer the service for leaf and yard debris collection on an as-needed basis.

Clean wood is not required to be collected by haulers.

**Stump & Root Masses:** Burial of stumps, root masses, and rotted wood, away from landfills, is acceptable and would not be viewed by the ANR Solid Waste Program as “landfill disposal”.

### **VARIANCES (for facilities only)**

Any person who owns or is in control of a transfer station, landfill, or solid waste facility may apply to ANR for a variance from these requirements *if* the applicant demonstrates all of the following:

- alternative services, including on-site management, are available in the area served by the facility;
- the alternative services have capacity to serve the needs of all persons served by the facility requesting the variance; and
- the alternative services are convenient to persons served by the facility requesting the variance.

To be eligible for this variance, the ANR Solid Waste Program considers convenient alternative services “in the area” as those that are available within the same town as the solid waste facility seeking the variance. If several towns share a facility, then the alternative service should at minimum be located within one of those towns, and serve all of those towns.

No variance shall be granted pursuant to this section except after public notice and an opportunity for a public meeting and until ANR has considered the relative interests of the applicant, other owners of property likely to be affected, and the general public. Variances are issued for limited periods of time.

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

**Department of Environmental Conservation**  
Waste Management & Prevention Division,  
Solid Waste Program  
1 National Life Drive, Davis 1, Montpelier, VT 05620-3704  
**(802) 828-1138**  
[www.recycle.vermont.gov](http://www.recycle.vermont.gov)

