



WASTE AND MATERIALS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM GUIDANCE FOR COMMENT

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT TITLE AND NUMBER

Guidance on Requirements for Haulers of Solid Waste or Recyclables

PROGRAM/BUREAU

Waste and Materials Management

GENERAL TOPIC

This document summarizes legal requirements for haulers of solid waste or recyclables. These requirements are mandatory for maintaining your Department of Natural Resources waste transportation license under s. NR 502.06, Wis. Adm. Code. It has been revised to reflect 2025 recycling rule changes.

FINAL DATE FOR COMMENTS

June 5, 2026

PUBLIC CONTACT FOR GUIDANCE

Lola Hoon, Lola.Hoon@wisconsin.gov

Guidance on Requirements for Haulers of Solid Waste or Recyclables



PUB-WA-1619 2026

Overview

This document summarizes legal requirements for haulers of solid waste¹ or recyclables². These requirements are mandatory for maintaining your Department of Natural Resources waste transportation license under s. NR 502.06, Wis. Adm. Code.

There are additional requirements for haulers who provide recycling services. The details can be found under s. NR 544.05, Wis. Adm. Code.

Recycling is mandatory in Wisconsin. As a hauler providing solid waste or recycling transportation service, you must be aware of these requirements and ensure that you and your staff comply with them.

Each year, the DNR receives complaints and reports of potential violations about solid waste and recycling services. Please help Wisconsin maintain a strong and respected recycling program by working with your staff to operate your business within the law. Here's how you can avoid becoming the subject of a complaint or potential violation to the DNR:

- **Clearly label containers used to collect recycling to distinguish their use for recycling purposes only.**
- **Notify your customers about state recycling requirements.**
- **Don't tell customers they don't have to recycle.** Not only is this wrong information, but haulers are required to notify customers of the need to comply with the recycling laws.
- **Keep recyclables separated from trash.** Once recyclables are separated for recycling, they must remain separated. Complaints about mixing recyclables with trash often arise because customers or neighbors do not realize that the hauler is operating a dual-chamber truck, or the trash and recycling trucks look identical. To avoid confusion, the DNR recommends using signage or paint to distinguish a recycling truck or dual-chamber truck from a trash truck

¹Solid waste includes garbage, refuse, or sludge from a waste treatment plant, water supply treatment plant or air pollution control facility; as well as other discarded or salvageable materials (including solid, liquid, semisolid or contained gaseous materials) resulting from industrial, commercial, mining or agricultural operations or community activities.

²Recyclables: Lead acid batteries; major appliances; waste oil; yard materials; tires; aluminum containers; corrugated cardboard or other container board; magazines; newspapers; office paper; glass containers; #1 & #2 plastic bottles and jars; and steel and bi-metal containers.

- **Don't tell customers the recyclables will be separated from the trash after collection.** There are currently no facilities in the state approved to extract recyclables from municipal solid waste.
- **Maintain good market quality of recyclables.** Avoid over-compacting your loads. Over-compaction leads to contamination of paper by embedding broken glass, resulting in lowered market value.
- **Provide residential recycling tonnages to responsible unit (RU) recycling programs by Feb. 1 each year.** For more details, see the "Rules about recyclables" section below.

Rules for all haulers

The following is a more complete overview of requirements under s. NR 502.06, Wis. Adm. Code, that apply to haulers of solid waste or recyclables. If you have questions about these requirements, please contact your DNR licensing, reporting and compliance specialist (contact information on last page).

1. **No person may operate or maintain a transportation service without an operating license from the DNR, unless they qualify for one of the exemptions listed in s. NR 502.06(2), Wis. Adm. Code.** If no exemption applies, people performing these services must have, or be directly employed by someone who has, a Wisconsin DNR waste transportation license.
2. **Comply with state landfill and incinerator bans** [s. NR 502.06(4)(e), Wis. Adm. Code]. If you are having trouble with clients putting banned materials in the trash, contact the local RU (visit dnr.wi.gov and search for "list of RU contacts"). Contact DNR recycling staff at DNRRecycling@wisconsin.gov if you have questions.

These items are banned from landfill disposal or incineration.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| • #1 & #2 plastic bottles and jars | • Electronics |
| • Aluminum containers | • Glass containers |
| • Corrugated cardboard and other container board | • Lead acid batteries |
| • Major appliances | • Magazines |
| • Newspapers | • Steel and bi-metal containers |
| • Office paper | • Tires |
| • Oil filters | • Waste oil |
| | • Yard materials |

3. **Notify your clients of the need to comply with recycling laws.** This requirement applies to all DNR waste transportation license holders [NR 502.06(4)(eg)]. It is intended to ensure that all haulers and their customers are aware that Wisconsin's recycling laws apply to all residential and non-residential facilities in Wisconsin, including those whose waste and recyclables are hauled out of state. See an example notification on the next page.
4. **You may only transport recyclables and other solid waste to facilities that are licensed, approved or exempted by the DNR** [s. NR 502.06(4)(b), Wis. Adm. Code]. To check the status of a facility, go to dnr.wi.gov and search for "waste facility and transporter list," or contact your DNR licensing, reporting and compliance specialist.
5. **Do not let your vehicles or containers cause a mess.** Do not allow the contents of the trucks or containers to spill or leak. Also, clean them regularly so as not to create a nuisance [s. NR 502.06(4)(c)&(d), Wis. Adm. Code]

- 6. Each of your vehicles must have “WDNR” followed by the DNR waste transportation license number lettered on the driver’s door.** The numbers may be painted or affixed decals and should be at least 2 inches high and easy to read. [s. NR 502.06(4)(a), Wis. Adm. Code].
- 7. Notify the DNR if you are planning to stop hauling.** Provide written notification to your DNR licensing, reporting and compliance specialist at least 30 days before ceasing services for an extended period of time [s. NR 502.06(4)(h), Wis. Adm. Code].
- 8. You may need additional DNR waste transportation licenses,** if you haul other items, such as infectious or hazardous waste. For more information visit dnr.wi.gov and search for “Can I Haul?”

How to notify clients of the recycling requirement

All solid waste / recyclables haulers and their clients need to be aware that Wisconsin’s recycling laws apply to all residential and nonresidential facilities. Licensed haulers must annually notify clients of recycling requirements.

For residential customers (single-family and 2-4 units): Notify the client verbally when first arranging for service or written notification within 45 days. Give written notification annually thereafter.

For customers that are non-residential or multi-family residential (5+ units): Provide written notification of recycling requirements at the time of arranging service. Give written notification annually thereafter.

Notification can take various forms, as long as the statement is clear. **You may include the statement in:**

- Service agreements/contracts
- Separate direct mailing to clients
- A monthly bill

Here is an example:

“Remember that state and local laws require everyone in Wisconsin to recycle newspaper; office paper; magazines; cardboard; glass, plastic, aluminum, and steel food and beverage containers; tires; yard waste; appliances; motor oil; and lead acid batteries. Call your local recycling program for more information or visit dnr.wi.gov and search for ‘What to recycle’.”

Document when and how you notify your clients

All notifications to clients, whether verbal or written, must be documented and records maintained for the current and previous calendar year. Documentation must include: a copy of the notification statement furnished to clients, a brief statement on how clients are notified upon start of service and annually thereafter, and a system to track when clients are notified. Adding a column to an existing spreadsheet to indicate the notification type and date(s) would be sufficient.

Rules about recyclables

The following is a brief overview of rules found in ss. NR 502.06 and NR 544.05, Wis. Adm. Code, related to transportation and handling of recyclables. **If you have questions,** please contact DNRRcycling@wisconsin.gov.

- **Residential recyclables that have been separated for recycling must be kept separated and clean.** They may not be landfilled or incinerated, and collection/transportation may not negatively affect their cleanliness or marketability (NR 502.06(4)(f) and NR 544.05(1)(a)1 & 3).

This means that any recyclable material that was separated for recycling must be transported separately from trash all the way to the processing facility. If the recycling compartment on the truck is full, it is still against the law to put recyclables in with trash, even if the intent is to separate them later.

- **Recyclable containers must be clearly labeled.** The containers provided for use in a recycling collection system must be clearly labeled to distinguish their use for recycling purposes only [NR 502.06(4)(i)].
- **Residential recyclables must be processed at a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) that is self-certified under s. NR 544.16,** Wis. Adm. Code, unless they are exempted under law as a single-commodity processor [NR 544.05(2)(b)]; NR 544.16(2)(b)] or are hauled directly to the final end-market. This rule applies to recyclables collected from single family and 2-4 unit dwellings whether or not you have a contract with an RU. A list of self-certified MRFs is available at dnr.wi.gov, search for “MRFs.”
- **Provide residential recycling tonnages to RUs.** By Feb.1 each year, haulers that pick up the kinds of recyclables listed below from single-family homes and/or 2-4 unit residences, whether by contract with a recycling responsible unit or through individual subscription services with the residences, must provide to the RU the tonnages of the recyclables collected in the previous calendar year and the name(s) of the MRFs used to process the materials collected to the RU. You must also provide this information to the DNR upon request. [s. NR 502.06(4)(er), Wis. Adm. Code]. RUs are required to report to the DNR by April 30 each year; please assist them by keeping good records and providing them with timely data.
 - Aluminum containers
 - Corrugated cardboard
 - Foam polystyrene packaging
 - Glass containers
 - Magazine, newsprint, office paper, and other similar paper
 - Plastic containers
 - Steel (tin) and bi-metal containers
- **Notify RUs of a change in MRF.** Within one week, notify responsible units of a change in the MRF used to process collected recyclables [NR 502.06(4)(ew)].
- **Maintain your records for three years.** You must keep satisfactory documentation that recyclable materials have been delivered to brokers, processors or end users of the materials, and provide this information to a DNR representative upon request [NR 502.06(4)(g)].

Additional Resources

To view the laws and codes referred to in this document, go to dnr.wi.gov and search for “recycling law.”

For help notifying clients, go to dnr.wi.gov and search for “recycling outreach.”

For a list of banned materials, visit dnr.wi.gov and search for “what to recycle.”

Wisconsin Recycling Markets Directory: www.wisconsinrecyclingdirectory.com

Contact the DNR

If you have questions about any of the information in this document, contact your regional licensing, reporting and compliance specialist. You can find them at <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Waste/EPAs.html>

Mailing address: DNR Waste & Materials Management Program, PO Box 7921 Madison, WI 53707

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Email: DNRRecycling@wisconsin.gov

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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