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July 2015 EcoFacts



Zero Waste Policies: Organics Collection

Organics collection is moving into the mainstream in some large metropolitan areas. It's a good thing, too, because 20% of the food we buy goes into the garbage instead of being eaten. The decomposing food and other organics profoundly increase greenhouse gas production (methane) in landfills. While curbside collection of organics is not yet widely available, there are opportunities for businesses in Lincoln and Omaha to compost their organic waste.

What materials can be composted? Take a look at this graphic from Eco-Cycle for general information, and be sure to check with your local service provider for more specifics.

COMPOST

COMPOSTABLE PAPER

dark & bright-colored paper



napkins, tissues & paper towels

greasy or waxed cardboard

FOODS & PLANTS



plant trimmings

SPECIALY-DESIGNED COMPOSTABLE PRODUCTS



bagasse



paper only, no plastic coating

TRUST THESE COMPOSTABLE PRODUCT LABELS:



NatureWorks LLC

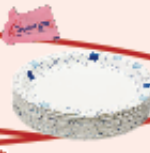
ingeo

PLEASE NO

NO PLASTIC



NO PLASTIC-COATED PAPER; PLACE THESE ITEMS IN TRASH >>



*CONTACT US FOR HOW TO RECYCLE THIS

What you can do?

If you and your green team are interested in exploring composting at your place of work, it will be helpful to be armed with some data. First, find out how much and where your organic waste is being produced in the facility. Check restrooms (for paper towels), cafeterias, coffee bars, and break rooms within your facility. Ask your compost service provider or WasteCap Nebraska to assist with an organics audit to determine how this will alter your internal collection process and dumpster sizes. Research the associated costs, cost avoidance and savings that will occur if this program is implemented.

Interview custodial, food service and building management employees (or contractors) to get a better understanding of current practices. Find out if your disposable service ware is compostable or can be replaced with compostable items. Take a look at this power point presentation on [Business Composting](#) (scroll to the bottom of the page) on WasteCap Nebraska's web site for more ideas.

Policy

In Nebraska, a statewide landfill ban on yard waste went into effect on September 1, 1994. Yard waste is defined as leaves and grass clippings. From April 1st through November 30th, yard waste cannot be disposed of in a landfill; however, some landfills are allowed to take yard waste year round to "aid in methane production for a beneficial use". In other words, methane is burned to create electricity. This method of recovery is better than letting methane escape into the atmosphere, but it does not fully capture all that is emitted by large landfills. Even if it did, burning still releases carbon dioxide. A much greater impact could be made by reducing the amount of organic waste arriving at landfill sites in the first place.

Composting yard wastes at a community site requires an NDEQ permit if the quantity accepted at the site is greater than 100,000 cubic yards per year, or greater than 1,000 cubic yards per year if something other than yard wastes (like sewage sludge or food waste) is mixed in the compost. Perhaps the exclusion of food waste from permitting requirements would be worth exploring in order to increase the number of accessible food waste composting sites across Nebraska and reduce methane emissions from landfills.

Visit www.wastecapne.org for all your recycling needs.



WasteCap Nebraska
402-436-2384
www.WasteCapNE.org



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