

## NEW RULES MAY INCREASE COMPOSTING AND DECREASE FOOD WASTE

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Effective July 7, 2016, TDEC's regulations regarding the permitting of composting facilities have changed ([Rule 0400-11-01.11; Requirements for Compost and Composting Facilities](#)). The Division of Solid Waste Management intends for these updated regulations to support the Division's objective to increase diversion of organic materials by 2025.

The new regulations are based on the Model Compost Rule Template (MCRT) created by the US Composting Council, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, and a volunteer Task Force consisting of state composting regulators, composting facility operators and other consultants. The new rules cover key aspects of designing and operating composting facilities that protect both the environment and human health.

The composting rules categorize waste into three different types and then break them down into three different tiers depending on the potential risk they pose for both human and environmental health:

- **Type One:** Consists of materials that pose a low risk to human health and the environment, including yard trimmings, woody materials and crop residuals;
- **Type Two:** Consists more of agricultural residuals, industrial by-products, agency approved food processing residuals and source-separated organics, which also pose low-risk for human health and environment;
- **Type Three:** Consists of mixed solid waste, sludge, diapers and bio-solids, which poses a higher-risk to human health and the environment from physical and chemical contaminants.

In addition, the new rules will allow small-scale compost operations to accept food scraps and vegetative debris from outside sources without a permit, so long as their throughput does not exceed 50 cubic yards a year (100 cubic yards a year if using an in-vessel system). For example, community gardens, urban farms, and other agricultural operations can now accept compostables from residential sources. These small-scale agricultural compost operations can also sell or give away their compost to be used at other agricultural operations.

Organic matter is currently a major component in our waste stream. Organics – carbon-based materials such as food scraps and yard waste – currently make up 20 to 30 percent of what we throw away. Besides taking up landfill space, organics produce methane, a potent greenhouse gas, when left to rot in a landfill. Organics in landfills account for approximately 20 percent of methane emissions in the United States according to the US EPA.

The Division of Solid Waste Management's goal is to reduce the amount of organics entering landfills through the promotion of waste minimization practices, organics reuse, anaerobic digestion and composting throughout the state at both the commercial and

residential level. The new rules may also take aim at the United States' first-ever national food waste reduction goal, calling for a 50 percent reduction by 2030.

The move to update the rules came after more than \$2.2 million in grants were awarded for recycling equipment, waste reduction and used oil recycling. Another \$2.4 million was distributed to local governments and nonprofit organizations for the purchase of composting equipment or facility infrastructure for composting. You can read the full details of the grant recipients here.

Grant funding for organics management will be available through TDEC's Division of Solid Waste Management for local governments and nonprofit organizations. Additional information on the application process will be made available by fall 2016.

For more information on composting, including TDEC's 2015-2025 Solid Waste and Materials Management Plan, click here.

Composting demo in Williamson County



Grant presentation to the Friends of Henry Horton State Park for the establishment of a full-scale composting operation in February

