



Massachusetts  
Department  
of  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION

# fact sheet

## Supermarket Recycling Program Certification

By certifying that it has a comprehensive recycling and reuse program in place, an individual supermarket can obtain a Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) Supermarket Recycling Program Certification (SRPC) and qualify for certain regulatory relief. Waste loads from a supermarket with SRPC status are exempt from MassDEP's routine comprehensive inspections at disposal and transfer facilities for the presence of paper (including cardboard), glass, metal and plastic containers, leaves and yard waste.

### Why the program was launched

Diverting organics and other materials from disposal to recycling and composting is good for both the environment and the supermarket industry's bottom line. MassDEP is using a voluntary approach to encourage individual supermarkets to develop sustainable recycling programs before taking the step of requiring them through regulation.

MassDEP and the Massachusetts Food Association (MFA), through a Memorandum of Understanding, have partnered to establish this *voluntary* certification program that encourages supermarkets to recycle and reuse organics and other materials. Each eligible store that applies to participate, then meets and maintains specific recycling and composting criteria, will obtain a MassDEP SRPC.

### Why supermarkets should participate

- **Save Money:** Massachusetts supermarkets with effective programs for recycling organics and other materials have so far saved between \$20,000 and \$40,000 per store per year, on average, in avoided disposal costs.
- **Positive Recognition:** Certified supermarkets are demonstrating that they are committed to reducing waste and being protective of the environment, and reap the benefits of resulting positive public image.
- **Regulatory Relief:** MassDEP exempts waste loads generated by supermarkets with SRPC status from routine comprehensive waste ban inspections for paper; cardboard; glass, metal and plastic containers; and leaves and yard wastes. See the next page for additional waste ban information.

### Criteria for participation

Eligible supermarkets are defined as grocery stores or supermarkets selling at retail a full line of dry grocery, canned goods, perishable and non-perishable items, with service deli, bakery, and seafood sections, and annual sales of \$2 million or more.

To participate in the voluntary program, a supermarket must certify to MassDEP that it has a comprehensive recycling or reuse program in place for the following materials:

1. **Cardboard:** old corrugated containers made from unwaxed paper with a ruffled (corrugated) inner liner; AND
2. **Organic Materials:**
  - For Donation: edible but non-saleable prepared, perishable, and non-perishable foods;
  - For Diversion: produce, edible and inedible food, wet and waxed cardboard\*, paper, plants, flowers, and wood boxes; AND
3. **Shrink and Plastic Wrap:** thin plastic film, either Low Density or Linear Low Density Polyethylene, used for packaging pallets or dry product.

*\*MassDEP recognizes that certain space and market constraints can sometimes prevent diversion of waxed cardboard. If a supermarket is unable to recycle waxed cardboard, it may apply for a waiver documenting store or composting facility constraints. MassDEP expects that the supermarket industry will work aggressively to resolve waxed cardboard recycling limitations.*

### Three Easy Steps to Participate:

1. Read and complete the certification form at [www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/supermkt.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/supermkt.htm). Also see this link for answers to FAQs or to obtain a waxed cardboard waiver form.
2. Print, sign and mail completed form to contact listed on the certification form. You may fax or e-mail the form, however MassDEP will need the original.
3. The certification is valid through June 30, 2009.

In addition, participating supermarkets must maintain records to verify that they are meeting program requirements. If 80 percent of the stores owned and operated by a particular company achieve and maintain SRPC status, that company will receive a company-wide certification. MassDEP may change the criteria and/or benefits of certification from year to year in consultation with MFA and individual supermarkets.

### How to participate

Individual supermarkets need to apply biennially by completing and submitting to MassDEP a certification form, available through the agency's Web site: [www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/supermkt.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/supermkt.htm). This includes store contact information, recycling and trash hauler and processing facility information, and food donation information.

### MassDEP waste ban regulations

Massachusetts waste ban regulations and policies require solid waste disposal and transfer facilities in the state to perform waste load inspections for the presence of recyclable and compostable materials, including: paper; glass, metal and plastic containers; leaves and yard waste; batteries; appliances; tires; cathode ray tubes; and construction and demolition debris (asphalt pavement; brick; concrete; wood; and metal).

The waste bans are designed to: 1) conserve capacity at existing disposal facilities; 2) minimize the need for new facility construction; and 3) signal to recyclables markets that large volumes of material will be available on a consistent basis. The bans also restrict certain toxic substances or materials that may adversely affect the environment when landfilled or incinerated.

Failed loads that contain unacceptable amounts of banned materials are: 1) rejected or reloaded when containing significant quantities of recoverable materials; 2) accepted and separated for recycling; or 3) accepted for disposal or transferred for disposal if materials are not recoverable. Once a waste load has been rejected, the waste generator or hauler may need to pay additional fees for reloading mixed waste at disposal facilities or culling recyclables from it. Some waste haulers proactively address the risk of possible load rejections by increasing service charges for all of their clients.

Businesses that do not set up programs to divert banned items from their waste run the risk of having their waste loads rejected at solid waste disposal or transfer facilities, or paying additional handling fees. Furthermore, MassDEP inspections and enforcement extend not only to waste haulers but also to generators who contract for the disposal of waste ban materials.

Waste loads originating from certified supermarkets are exempt from *comprehensive inspections* for paper; cardboard; glass, metal and plastic containers; leaves and yard waste. However, loads from supermarkets remain subject to routine ongoing waste stream monitoring for clearly visible banned materials. This enables MassDEP to ensure the integrity of the program and to verify that certified supermarkets are meeting program criteria. MassDEP will continue working cooperatively with the supermarket industry to incorporate any new disposal ban requirements into the certification program.

### Assistance and Support Available

MassDEP has developed materials to assist supermarkets in developing effective recycling, composting, and diversion programs including: the "Supermarket Composting Handbook" which is a step-by-step manual for setting up a composting program in a supermarket; lists of facilities that accept supermarket compostables and haulers that pick up the materials; and an application for technical assistance. These are available at [www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/supermkt.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/supermkt.htm).

Supermarkets are also invited to contact MassDEP and/or the MFA for advice and information at:

- Morgan Harriman, MassDEP (617-654-6580) or [morgan.harriman@state.ma.us](mailto:morgan.harriman@state.ma.us)
- The Massachusetts Food Association (617-542-3085).

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This information is available in  
alternate format by calling our  
ADA Coordinator at  
(617) 574-6872.

