

City of San Diego Recycling Ordinance

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What is the City Recycling Ordinance?

The City Recycling Ordinance is a City Council adopted mandatory policy requiring the public to separate and recycle mixed recyclables and organic waste materials at residential facilities, commercial facilities, mixed use facilities, and permitted special events. Click [here](#) to read the full Recycling Ordinance.

Who is affected by the ordinance?

All single-family residences; City-serviced multi-family residences; and privately serviced businesses, commercial/institutional facilities, multi-family properties, mixed-use facilities and City-permitted special events are required to recycle.

Commercial facilities are buildings that people do not live in. Businesses include, but are not limited to, industrial or manufacturing, restaurant, retail, office, hotels, shopping centers, theaters, non-profit organizations, churches, private schools and some government entities (those not considered State agencies) and non-profit organizations.

Multi-family properties are apartments and condominiums with two or more residences on a single lot.

Mixed-use facilities which have a majority of its square footage devoted to residential uses will comply with residential facilities serviced by franchise hauler requirements.

Mixed-use facilities which have a majority of its square footage devoted to commercial uses will comply with commercial facilities serviced by franchise hauler requirements.

What materials must be recycled?

The ordinance requires recycling of plastic and glass bottles and jars, paper, newspaper, metal containers, cardboard, rigid plastics including clean food containers, jugs, tubs, trays, pots, buckets and toys.

Organic waste materials must also be recycled.

- For commercial facilities, organic waste includes food scraps, food-soiled paper, yard trimmings and nonhazardous wood waste.
- For multi-family, organic waste includes yard trimmings and nonhazardous wood waste.

Am I required to recycle food scraps under the ordinance?

Only commercial and mixed-use facilities which have the majority of their square footage devoted to commercial use are required to recycle food scraps, food-soiled paper and yard trimmings at this time.

Privately serviced multi-family properties and permitted special events will be required to recycle food scraps and food-soiled paper as determined by the Environmental Services Department (ESD) and 181 days after the City gives public notice in newspapers and on the City's website.

Why has the City of San Diego adopted this ordinance?

The City adopted the ordinance to

- Extend the life of the landfill
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Meet the State recycling requirements
- Increase the recycling of materials

The City operates the Miramar Landfill, which is currently the only municipal landfill in the City. The Miramar Landfill currently is expected to close in 2028. Additional recycling efforts, particularly of paper, cardboard, organic waste and other recyclable materials, will assist the City in achieving its goal of [zero waste](#) disposed in landfills.

How do I sign up for recycling and/or organic waste recycling service or change my containers?

Commercial facilities, multi-family properties and permitted special events

Select from Franchise Haulers and Certified Collectors who are authorized to operate in the City of San Diego for your collection service needs.

- [Recycling hauler list for businesses and multi-family](#)
- [Recycling hauler list for special events](#)

City-serviced residential properties

Request for collection service assistance or additional recycling containers by contacting Environmental Services at 858-694-7000, trash@sandiego.gov or by submitting a [GetItDone request](#). Visit our [Trash Collection Schedule webpage](#) to search your address and check if your property is serviced by ESD Collections.

To find out how to dispose of waste items not accepted in the trash or recycling (such as light bulbs, batteries and other hazardous waste), please visit WasteFreeSD.org.

What if I don't have space to add new containers?

First option, contact ESD at 858-694-7000 or sdrecyclingworks@sandiego.gov to request a consultation to discuss your space constraints. A Recycling Specialist can discuss container configuration options and may schedule a site visit appointment to assess your collection area.

Second option, your property can consider self-hauling or back-hauling recyclable and organic waste materials to a recycling facility. You may also want to consider sharing recycling and/or organic waste recycling containers and service with a neighboring property with their permission and approval. The responsible persons (the individual or entity responsible for the management of solid waste for disposal or recycling) must submit to ESD a [Recycling Hauling Reporting Form](#) if you decide to self-haul, back-haul, or share service.

Third option, ESD may make an exemption if physical space limitations prevent full compliance with ordinance. The responsible persons seeking this exemption must provide documentation from franchise hauler service providers, licensed architects or engineers that demonstrates the property does not have adequate space for containers for all generated recyclable and/or organic waste materials.

The property owner can request for a space exemption request with supporting space limitation documentation by emailing sdrecyclingworks@sandiego.gov or mailing

Environmental Services Department
Attn: City Recycling Ordinance Enforcement
9601 Ridgehaven Ct, Ste 320
San Diego, CA 92123-1636

What if I don't need a collection container because I self-haul or backhaul my recyclables and/or organic waste materials?

The responsible persons at the facility (the individual or entity responsible for the management of solid waste for disposal or recycling) must fill out and submit annually a [Recycling Hauling Reporting Form](#) to the Environmental Services. The Department will respond to you after receiving and reviewing your Reporting Form.

Please complete the form if the following applies to your property.

- Use the service of a recyclable materials collector who is **NOT** a franchise hauler or Certified Recyclable Material Collector (i.e., you use a non-Certified Recyclable Material Collector);
- Self-hauls recyclables to a recycling facility; and/or
- Shares recycling service with a neighboring property that has the proper recycling collection service and has given your property permission and approval.

What will happen if I don't follow these requirements?

The responsible persons at the facility will be held accountable if a property is found to be out of compliance with the ordinance. A responsible person is the individual or entity responsible for the management of solid waste for disposal or recycling.

- A written warning (Notice of Violation) will be sent to the responsible persons and a City of San Diego Code Compliance Officer will determine a follow-up date and the amount of time needed to reach compliance.
- Free assistance will be offered to ensure the responsible persons understand the ordinance and any other actions they must take in order to comply.

If the property continues not to comply, even after assistance has been offered, the responsible persons may be subject to enforcement actions including but not limited to criminal prosecution, civil injunction, administrative abatement, civil penalties, revocation of permits, recordation of the Notice of Violation and withholding of future municipal permits.

The Code Compliance Officer may:

- Issue an Administrative Citation not below \$250 for the first offense.
- Issue a new follow-up date in accordance with the Administrative Citation.
- Continue to coordinate technical assistance with a City Recycling Specialist.
- Continue to issue Administrative Citations not to exceed \$1,000 for each subsequent offense should compliance not be met on the Code Officer's follow-up date(s).
- An \$88 re-inspection fee will be issued for each inspection starting at the third inspection.

Additional information on how the law will be enforced can be found [here](#).

Are there penalties for failing to comply with this ordinance? What are the penalties?

Violators of the ordinance may be subject to citations and fines of \$250 for the first, \$500 for the second or up to \$1,000 for additional violations within a year. An \$88 re-inspection fee will also be issued for each inspection starting at the third inspection. The goal of the ordinance is compliance and environmental protection.

What resources and support are available to help with compliance for my business, apartment or condo property, or special event?

Environmental Services can provide free help to set up or improve your facility's recycling program, help educate your employees and tenants about recycling requirements, assess any space or container setup constraints and assist you with correcting a violation.

Contact sdrecyclingworks@sandiego.gov or customer service at 858-694-7000 for assistance.

Visit recyclingworks.com for more information on the City of San Diego Recycling Ordinance, how to comply, exemption criteria, educational signage and lists of franchise haulers.