Seattle Public Utilities

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):
Seattle Annual Recycling and Reuse Report and Recycler License

These FAQs are available online with live links at the Annual Recycling and Reuse Report and Recycler License website: seattle.gov/utilities/recyclerlicense

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Why does the City require recyclers to report their recycling and reuse activities and to get a license to operate in Seattle?

Seattle Municipal Code 6.250 requires recyclers, including composters, operating in Seattle to report their recycling and reuse activities and to a get a Recycler License in order to provide the City with timely and accurate data on the quantities of recycled/composted materials they collect and/or process so that the City may achieve the most cost-effective system for collection, processing, disposal or recycling of all solid wastes, including construction, demolition and land-clearing wastes generated in Seattle.

Link to Seattle Municipal Code 6.250:
https://library.municode.com/wa/seattle/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT6BURE_SUBTITLE_IVNELICO_CH6.250COPRREMA.

Who must report their recycling and reuse activities?

Recycling collectors and processors must report their recycling, composting, and reuse activities annually. If your business or non-profit does any of the following activities, you must submit a **Recycling and Reuse Report** (seattle.gov/utilities/recyclerlicense) each year and get a Recycler License by March 31:

- Collected, hauled, transported, and/or processed recyclable materials originating in the City of Seattle (regardless of where the materials were delivered to).
  - Construction and demolition recycling facilities that accepted materials from Seattle construction job sites, Seattle businesses, non-profits, or Seattle residents are required to report.
- Provided drop boxes or operated one or more drop-off facilities for recyclable materials in the City of Seattle.
- Operated a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) processing materials originating in the City of Seattle.

What is a recycling "Collector"?

Seattle Municipal Code 6.250 requires annual reporting of collectors and processors of recyclable and reusable materials, including food and yard waste. A "Collector" is defined as:

- A person who operates one or more vehicles for the collection of recyclable materials from residential, commercial, or industrial premises or construction sites in the City; or
- A person engaged in construction, demolition, or land clearing who hauls recyclable materials away from job sites in the City; or
- A person who places drop boxes, kiosks, barrels, or other containers in the City where the public may deposit recyclable materials; or
- A person who maintains one or more business premises in the City where the public may bring recyclable materials, including but not limited to salvaged or surplus building materials and discarded household items and clothing; or
- A person who, as part of regular business activities in the City, transports recyclable materials, including but not limited to product packaging, oils, and food waste, directly from one or more business premises to a recyclable materials processor.

City contractors who pick up residential and/or commercial garbage, recyclable materials, including food and yard waste, are collectors under this definition. Recyclers may be collectors and/or processors. Link to Seattle Municipal Code 6.250:
https://library.municode.com/wa/seattle/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT6BURE_SUBTITLE_IVNELICO_CH6.250COPRREMA.

What is a recycling "Processor"?

Seattle Municipal Code 6.250 requires annual reporting of collectors and processors of recyclable and reusable materials, including food and yard waste. A "Processor" is defined as:

> A person who operates a facility that receives recyclable materials originating in the City from collectors or private individuals where such materials are sorted for marketability by type, quality, or other criteria and then sold directly to the public for reuse or shipped to a recycling firm or facility for further processing.

City contractors who operate transfer stations, materials recovery facilities (MRFs), or other facilities where waste materials are sorted for reshipment or disposal are processors under this definition. Recyclers may be collectors and/or processors.

Link to Seattle Municipal Code 6.250:
https://library.municode.com/wa/seattle/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT6BURE_SUBTITLE_IVNELICO_CH6.250COPRREMA.

What does my business or non-profit have to report?

Report on tons of recyclable and reusable materials, including food and yard waste, that your business or non-profit received from Seattle (Materials Received) and where those materials then went and how they were used (Destination and Final Use of Materials).

For "Materials Received," provide the tons of the materials you collected or hauled from Seattle residents, businesses, non-profits, or construction job sites or handled from Seattle sources. Note that the City requires that you itemize recycled materials originating from construction and demolition (C&D) projects.

For "Destination and Final Use of Materials," list the companies to which you sold or delivered recyclable or reusable materials, including food waste, yard waste, and construction materials, and the tons sold or delivered to a buyer. Select a buyer company from the dropdown list or type in the name of the company if not listed. If you sold reusable goods to the public, please note this in your **Recycling and Reuse Report** (seattle.gov/utilities/recyclerlicense).

How does my business or non-profit report its recycling activities?

We recommend reporting online using the **Recycling and Reuse Report** Web App at https://web8.seattle.gov/CE_RecycleReportClient/. Business and contact information is retained in the Web App between years.

Alternatively, download and complete the electronic Microsoft Excel version of this report in Microsoft Excel at seattle.gov/utilities/recyclerlicense. If you are using the electronic version of the **Recycling and Reuse Report,** email the completed form to: SPU_recyclerlicense@seattle.gov.

Why did the recycler license fee increase in 2025?

In 2025, the annual regulatory fee to license companies that collect, haul, transport, and/or process recyclable materials increased from $105 to $500. The $105 fee was established in 2006 and has not changed until 2025. The increase aligns the licensing fee with the cost of regulating recycling businesses and

ensuring they are reporting their collection, processing, recycling, or disposing of solid waste as appropriate by law.

Where can I find instructions on how to use the Recycling and Reuse Report Web App and electronic Microsoft Excel Form?

For instructions on how to complete your report in the **Recycling and Reuse Report** Web App, check out the *Recycling and Reuse Report App How To Guide* available at seattle.gov/utilities/recyclerlicense on the right side of the webpage under "Resources" or, watch the "how to" video posted here: https://youtu.be/7KYv1eBSy6k. You can access the **Recycling and Reuse Report** Web App at https://web8.seattle.gov/CE_RecycleReportClient/.

For the 2024 reporting cycle, we are offering 1:1 help sessions to help you submit your report via the online app. Be sure to visit seattle.gov/utilities/recyclerlicense in January for more information.

Instructions on how to complete your report in the Excel form appear on the worksheet labeled "2. Instructions." You can download the Excel form at seattle.gov/utilities/recyclerlicense. If you still have questions, check out the other *FAQs* for answers, or contact us at SPU_recyclerlicense@seattle.gov.

How does the City define different recyclable and reusable materials?

A list of recyclable and reusable materials, along with definitions, is available on our webpage at Recyclable and Reuseable Material Type Definitions. The material list and definitions are also available in the Recycle and Reuse Report Web App and electronic Excel form.

How do I measure the materials I collected or processed in tons?

See the *General Measurement Standards and Reporting Guidelines* at General Measurement Standards and Reporting Guidelines for volume and count-to-weight conversion factors.

- **If reporting in the Recycling and Reuse Report Web App** (Home Page - RecycleReportClient) – Use the "Tons Calculator" (link below the tons category) to convert the weight from pounds (lbs.) to tons (T.).

- **If reporting in the electronic Excel form** - In the Excel form, use the worksheet named "7. Conversion" with conversion factors to calculate the weight of the recyclable or reusable material you collected or processed. Convert pounds to tons using 2,000 pounds (lbs.) = 1 ton (T.)

What should I report if I don't have weights for the recyclables and/or reusables I collected and/or processed?

Check for weights, volumes, counts, or units from receipts, vehicle transaction reports, and/or invoices from the vendors that receive your materials. Use the *General Measurement Standards and Reporting Guidelines* at General Measurement Standards and Reporting Guidelines to convert to volume/count/units to pounds. Please contact SPU_Recyclerslicense@seattle.gov if you need more assistance.

How do I report co-mingled or mixed recycling?

If you have co-mingled recycling or mixed recycling, use the material name "Other Recycled Materials" **and list the individual materials with estimated amounts** in tons in the description. It is important to estimate the breakout of these materials into categories by tonnage for accurate reporting.

How do I report reuse?

In both the **Recycling and Reuse Report** App and Excel form, select "Reuse" in the "Final Use" field. If needed, include a description of material for reuse in the "Final Use" description field. The amount (estimates accepted) of materials designated for reuse, such as selling salvaged or surplus building materials, used household items and clothing, or repaired computers or appliances, must be reported.

Can I submit to Seattle the recycling and/or composting facilities report I prepared for the Washington State Department of Ecology?

No. They are not the same report. The list of recyclable materials in the **Annual Recycling and Reuse Report** is similar but not identical to the list of materials in the annual report required by the Department of Ecology. Seattle does not accept copies of the Ecology forms.

Why is it important to do the Recycling and Reuse Report?

Your business or non-profit plays a vital role in Seattle reaching its waste reduction goals. Your completed **Annual Recycling and Reuse Report** helps inform waste reduction programs. Based on 2023 reporting, we estimate that businesses and non-profits recycled or composted 234,704 tons of material, or 66.4% of waste generated by the commercial sector. The overall recycling rate for Seattle is 53.4%.

To learn more about Seattle's recycling goals and progress to date, visit seattle.gov/utilities/about/reports/solid-waste-reports and select the link for "*2023 Waste Prevention and Recycling Report.*"

Will the information I provide in the Recycling and Reuse Report be publicly available?

SPU will not publish your data. However, the information you provide in your **Annual Recycling and Reuse Report** may be subject to public disclosure. If you wish to request confidentiality for portions of your report, please notify SPU in writing no later than March 31 according to the instructions in the *Confidentiality Statement* in the packet you received in the mail. If you would like a copy of the *Confidentiality Statement*, please request one by sending an email to SPU_recyclerlicense@seattle.gov.

What happens if my business or non-profit doesn't submit a complete and accurate Annual Recycling and Reuse Report?

Failure to submit a complete and accurate **Annual Recycling and Reuse Report** and the **Recycler License Application/Renewal** by March 31 may result in fines and statutory fees of up to $500 (Seattle Municipal Code 6.202.470).

In addition, an inaccurate or incomplete **Annual Recycling and Reuse Report** may result in the denial of your **Recycler License Application/Renewal**. The Department of Finance and Administrative Services Consumer

Protection Division enforces these penalties and will reach out to you if your license application and recycling report are not received on time.

What if I have questions about or need help completing the Annual Recycling and Reuse Report or the Recycler License Application/Renewal?

We will be offering 1:1 help sessions to submit your annual report via the online app. The website will be updated in January with help session information: seattle.gov/utilities/recyclerlicense. If you have questions about or need help completing your **Annual Recycling and Reuse Report**, please contact Sherri Johnson at 206-684-7446 or SPU_recyclerlicense@seattle.gov.

How do I get a Recycler License?

To obtain your Recycler License, follow these three steps:

1. Complete the **Recycler License Application/Renewal** included in the packet you received in the mail, or download it from seattle.gov/utilities/recyclerlicense,

2. Submit your completed **Annual Recycling and Reuse Report** online using the App at seattle.gov/utilities/recyclerlicense or by emailing your Excel file to SPU_recyclerlicense@seattle.gov, and

3. Send the completed **Recycler License Application/Renewal**, along with a check for $500 payable to "City of Seattle" by March 31, to:

   > City of Seattle, Department of Finance and Administrative Services
   > Attn: Recycler License
   > 700 5th Avenue, Suite 4300
   > P.O. Box 34214
   > Seattle, WA 98124-4214
   > consumerprotection@seattle.gov
   > (206) 386-1267