



Community Composting Regulations

The regulatory environment for community composting can be complex. Some states may require a compost facility permit or you may have to file for an exemption. There may be zoning approval required with local jurisdictions. If there will be offsite collection of food scraps, even with bicycles, this may require some sort of transport approval. Be sure to be transparent and communicate with the owner of the property, whether public or private.

Of course, it is always imperative that best management practices be observed by all of your compost team.

State Regulations can include:

- Small-scale exemptions
- On-farm exemptions
- Feedstock restrictions
- Product registration requirements
- Operator training requirements
- Product utilization regulations

Local Regulations often focus on:

- Zoning
- Rodent, animal avoidance
- Type of composting system

Where to Find Information:

- State Department of Environmental Conservation
- State Solid Waste Programs
- State Agency of Agriculture (for on-farm composting)
- Your local Solid Waste Management Entity
- Your town office

Other Community Composting Tip Sheets to consult: [Systems & Operations](#); [Process Management](#); [Recordkeeping](#); [Be a Good Neighbor](#).

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Setbacks and Buffers:

While most states do not have regulations for setbacks and buffers for community scale compost operations, be sure to check for zoning regulations that may apply.

Regardless of regulations, the following are general guidelines to follow:

- Do not site your compost system less than 3 feet from side lot lines; 10 feet from front lot line; or 25 feet from the back-lot line (depending on what the property backs up to).
- Ensure adequate distance from drinking wells, wetlands, surface water bodies & flood plains.
- Prevent drainage from compost piles into waterways or onto neighboring properties; pay attention to slopes; berms or compost socks may be required.
- Keep the area visually appealing.
- Have a health, safety & fire emergency plan; consider whether you also need to address security & vandalism concerns.
- Keep accurate monitoring & record keeping.
- Write up provisions for controlling odors.
- Have a contingency plan in case of illness, inclement weather, etc.
- Follow good neighbor practices