



Universal Zero Waste Ordinance

The City of Boulder is working to become a zero waste community, where we reduce the amount of waste we create, and reuse, recycle and compost most of what we throw away. The Universal Zero Waste Ordinance (UZWO) is one of many community-wide efforts to work towards Boulder’s zero waste future. UZWO requires all businesses to provide access to separated collections for recycling, compostable materials and landfill-bound trash.

What does this mean for your restaurant?

All restaurants and grocery stores in Boulder need to report compliance with the UZWO periodically. By reducing and separating waste, your business reduces its environmental impact and becomes a role model for our community. Your customers and employees will appreciate your efforts too! Below are the necessary steps to comply with the requirements.

Step One: Ensure you have the right bins and signs

The UZWO requires that every business has properly labeled bins in the right places.

- **Back-of-house:** Food businesses must have bins for all three waste streams (compost, recycle and landfill) in each employee-only area, such as a kitchen, bar or service area. These bins must be clearly labeled.



An exception can be made if an employee-only area does not generate a particular waste stream. For instance, bar service areas may not generate compost, so they may only need recycle and landfill bins and signs.

- **Front-of-house:** If you have a “self-bussing” restaurant where customers are clearing their own tables, you must provide separated collection containers for recycling and landfill-bound trash. The bins must be grouped together and clearly signed, including descriptions in English and Spanish.



Important: Boulder businesses are [no longer required to provide front-of-house compost bins](#) until further notice. The city will continue to support businesses that want to keep compost collection available to customers, but they must meet [new standards to avoid contamination](#).

- **Restrooms:** You are not required to separately collect compostable paper towels in customer restrooms, but if you choose to do so, the compost container must be accompanied by a trash bin, and both must be clearly labeled.

Step Two: Train your employees

Another part of the UZWO requires that you train your employees on how to identify and separate recycling and compostable materials from landfill-bound trash. This can be accomplished by viewing the training video ([English](#) or [Spanish](#)) and then taking a quiz that tests waste sorting knowledge ([English](#) or [Spanish](#)). Advisors are also available to provide onsite or online training. It is further recommended that you include waste sorting training within any onboarding processes you have.

Step Three: Complete and submit the reporting form

Food businesses must periodically report compliance to the city by submitting an online [Zero Waste Reporting Form](#). Businesses that do not report by the deadline are considered non-compliant.

Need Help?

Partners for a Clean Environment (PACE) advisors are available to help you achieve compliance with the Universal Zero Waste Ordinance. Reach out today for complementary support:



- Standard signs and/or stickers
- Custom signs specific to your businesses' waste
- Employee training
- Compost and/or recycling bins
- Reporting form guidance

(303) 786-7223 | pacepartners@bouldercounty.org | www.pacepartners.com



Free Compostable Bags are Available Through the Green Bag Giveaway Program

After completing the Zero Waste Reporting Form, you can enroll in a subscription for compostable bin liners, paid for by the City of Boulder's Disposable Bag Fee. If you choose to participate, you will receive up to two boxes a month, delivered straight to your door, free of charge.

