



# City of Boulder Climate Initiatives

## Immediate Changes to Compost Collection Rules for Businesses

In July 2022, the city's only commercial compost processor, A1 Organics, informed the city and its zero waste partners of a growing contamination issue in the community's compost stream. One main source of the contamination is customer-facing compost collection containers in businesses.

Haulers may now be inspecting the contents of compost dumpsters or carts for contamination before emptying to avoid truckloads being rejected by A1 Organics. Please follow the standards below to avoid rejection of your materials, which may require you to take remedial action or result in extra charges.

### Prevalent compost contaminants include:

- Single use/disposable foodware plastics
- Plastic bottles
- Disposable latex gloves
- Glass
- Non-compostable takeout containers
- Diapers and other non-paper towel bathroom waste

The city is working with local partners and waste haulers to address the situation, which threatens the future of a compost program in Boulder.

The goal of the compost collection requirement is **quality over quantity**, with a focus on **food discards** and **organic waste**, which are the best feedstocks for making high quality finished compost.

To address this urgent challenge, the city is making immediate changes to compost collection rules for businesses until further notice:

1. **Address customer-level contamination issues:** Allow businesses to remove front-of-house, customer-facing compost receptacles. (Customer-facing recycling containers and back-of-house compost collection are still required.)
2. **Reduce bathroom-generated contamination:** Allow businesses with public restrooms to remove bathroom compost receptacles. Businesses with employee-only bathrooms must include a clearly labeled trash receptacle alongside bathroom compost bins clearly labeled "paper towels and tissues only."



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This means that “fast casual” restaurants and cafes where customers bus their own tables must meet the new compliance standards listed below if they would like to continue collecting compostable materials front-of-house. Separated recycling collection is still required, and there are no changes to back-of-house waste separation requirements in food prep areas or employee spaces.

### **New Standards for Optional Customer-Facing Compostable Material Collection**

The city encourages businesses that wish to continue diverting front-of-house compostable materials from landfills to do so. There is assistance available to help all businesses reach this zero-contamination standard.

Businesses must meet the following standards to continue customer-facing compostable material collection:

- Train and designate an employee as “Compost Liaison” to manage the program and educate other staff.
- Ensure compost signs are obvious, clear, visible and posted directly above or next to the container in the customer's direct line-of-sight. Consider creating customized signage specific to the waste materials used in your business.
- Ensure compost signs are similarly posted in employee-only break areas and common spaces.
- Inspect and remove non-compostable materials from compost collection bins before emptying into cart or dumpster.
- Ensure that all compostable foodware given to customers is labeled BPI or CMA certified. No label means it is not compostable.
- Include waste sorting training in onboarding processes for new employees.
- Monitor outside collection dumpsters for illegal dumping and remove any contamination.
- Ensure any janitorial and custodial staff, and any staff who handles waste, is trained and understands sorting requirements.
- Landfill bins must be included next to all bathroom compost bins and both bins must have clear signage. Signage for compost bins in the bathroom should read, “Paper towels and tissues only.”
- Use a “not sure bin” in the kitchen and/or staff common areas for items that employees are unsure how to sort. Custom signage should be considered for items that are repeatedly put in this bin.



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### Need help with compliance?

Partners for a Clean Environment (PACE) consultants are available to help you achieve compliance with the UZWO. Reach out for free supplies and support, including:

- Standard waste signs and stickers
- Custom signs specific to your business' waste
- Compost and recycling bins
- Help with employee training
- Assistance with the UZWO reporting form
- Consultation on takeout container options



**303-786-7223**

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**[www.pacepartners.com](http://www.pacepartners.com)**

### Opportunities to Shift Away from Disposable Foodware

Current compost contamination challenges highlight the need to shift away from disposable foodware altogether. While compostable foodware is a preferable alternative to plastic, it is not the best ingredient for high-quality compost and is easily confused with non-compostable look-alike products. To help accelerate a transition away from disposable items, the city encourages all food establishments to consider ways to reduce waste of all kinds.

#### Opportunities include:

- Provide single use/disposable foodware by customer request only.
- If currently using disposable items for on-premises dining, switch to durable foodware.
- Offer a reusable takeout container option to customers. Reusable containers are less expensive than compostable or recyclable single use options.
  - PACE business consultants can help! Contact 303-786-7223 or [info@PACEpartners.com](mailto:info@PACEpartners.com) to learn more about this option.

Thank you for doing your part to protect the City of Boulder's compost program.

Explore the city's circular economy goals, initiatives and resources by visiting [www.ZeroWasteBoulder.com](http://www.ZeroWasteBoulder.com).