

# Oregon Metro Implements Business Food Scraps Separation Requirements

## Policy Description



**Food accounts for 18% of what Portland Metro residents and businesses send to their local landfill.**

---Source: Metro "Food Scraps Policy"

### Quick Facts

**LOCATION:** Portland, OR metropolitan area

**MARKET SECTOR:** Businesses including grocery stores, restaurants, lodging and hotels, hospitals, correctional facilities, colleges and universities, and food processing plants

**PROGRAM/POLICY TYPE:** Food Scraps Separation and Disposal Requirements

**PROGRAM START:** Implementation began March 31, 2022

Metro is the regional government for the Oregon portion of the Portland metropolitan area, covering portions of Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties. The government serves more than 1.5 million people in Portland and 23 other Oregon cities. Metro's responsibilities include management of diverse functions including the regional transportation system, maintaining parks and natural areas, operation of venues including the

Oregon Zoo, performing arts centers, and the Oregon Convention Center, and oversight of the region's solid waste system. Metro is thus responsible for working with local communities to manage garbage, recycling, and composting in a safe, healthy, environmentally friendly, and cost-effective manner.

In 2018, the Metro Council adopted a new policy that requires its largest food service businesses to separate their food scraps from other garbage starting in March of 2022. Concurrently, city and county governments that oversee the collection of garbage and recycling programs must ensure that food scraps collection services are available to participating businesses. Food wastes were identified as the largest single recoverable material sent to the landfill, and their decomposition produces methane gas which is 25 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. While landfills are designed with biogas collection systems, they are "leaky", and methane is released to the atmosphere with negative greenhouse gas impacts. Collecting food scraps is beneficial as the scraps can be anaerobically digested to produce biogas that can be cleaned, compressed, and injected into a natural gas pipeline; used in vehicle fleets; or used as a fuel for combined heat and power (CHP) projects that generate electrical energy while providing waste heat for space or water heating. In addition, the effluent from food waste digestion is an excellent soil additive, the value of which would be lost in a closed landfill.

## What Scraps are Covered by the Food Scraps Separation Policy?

All food service businesses that produce over 250 pounds per week of food scraps are required to participate. Food scraps include excess, spoiled, unusable, and inedible food such as waste from fruits, vegetables, meats, dairy products, fish, shellfish, nuts, seeds, grains, coffee grounds, and other waste materials that are created during the storage, preparation, cooking, handling, selling, or serving of food for human consumption. The policy only covers food scraps that are generated in the "back-of-house" food preparation or kitchen areas that are not accessible to customers. "Front-of-

house” activities where food is consumed and often disposed of by customers are not covered due to the potential for contamination of the food scrap waste stream by paper, cardboard, plastic, glass, or other non-food items.

For multi-outlet businesses, the 250 pounds per week requirement is based upon the amount of food waste generated per location, rather than for the entire business. For facilities with multiple buildings but with common ownership such as a college or corporate campus, the ordinance requirements are triggered by the total amount generated by all food-related operations.

Back-of-the house staff must be trained not to contaminate the food waste stream with items such as towels, wiping cloths, oven mitts, aprons, food safety/sanitation items such as hair nets or beard guards, plastic bottles or lids, and plastic/rubber/latex gloves used for food handling or cleaning. Local governments are required to submit an annual implementation plan to Metro regarding the business food waste requirement.

## What Commercial Businesses are Covered Under the Policy?

Covered businesses subject to the food waste requirements include:

Cafeterias and buffets	Grocery wholesale and retail outlets
Caterers	Hospitals <sup>1</sup>
Colleges and universities	Hotels <sup>1</sup>
Correctional facilities	Nursing and residential care facilities <sup>1</sup>
Drinking establishments <sup>1</sup>	Retirement and assisted living homes <sup>1</sup>
Elementary and secondary schools <sup>1</sup>	Specialty food markets
Food product manufacturers	Warehouse clubs
Full-service restaurants	

<sup>1</sup> Only businesses with full-service restaurants or on-site food preparation services fall under the collection program requirements.

## How Does this Policy Affect CHP?

The City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services is constructing an Organic Waste Receiving Facility (OWRF) at its Columbia Boulevard Wastewater Treatment Plant (CBWTP). The CBWTP has excess anaerobic digester capacity and source separated food wastes diverted from landfills will be offloaded into storage tanks where the food wastes will be pumped into existing digesters for co-digestion with biosolids. The receiving facility will also accept fats, oils, and greases (FOG) from restaurant grease traps.

The CBWTP already has two 850 kW biogas-fueled Jenbacher reciprocating engine generating sets that produce about 12 million kWh of electrical energy annually. Both engines will undergo upgrades in 2023 to allow combustion with biogas and natural gas blends. Current thinking is to treat both WWTF and OWRF biogas production to pipeline quality, followed by compression and injection of the renewable natural gas (RNG) into a nearby NW Natural gas distribution pipeline. A contracted third-party off-taker will obtain state and federal renewable attribute credits through sale of the RNG into the transportation sector. The RNG facility is expected to be up and running by late summer of 2022 with the OWRF operational by late fall of 2023. After RNG project completion and prior to OWRF operation, one engine will run on natural gas. After the OWRF comes online, the cogeneration fuel will primarily be biogas with natural gas blended in when required to meet thermal demands.

## For More Information

**U.S. DOE NORTHWEST CHP TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE PARTNERSHIP (CHP TAP)**

[www.nwchptap.org](http://www.nwchptap.org)

Date produced: 2022

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