

Guidance

Simpler recycling: workplace recycling in England

Guidance from 31 March 2025 (or 31 March 2027 for micro-firms) for waste collectors and workplaces on separating dry recyclables, food waste and black bin waste.

From:

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

(/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs)

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From 31 March 2025 (or 31 March 2027 for micro-firms), all workplaces (businesses and non-domestic premises) in England have a legal duty to present the following wastes separated in accordance with the arrangements with their waste collector:

- dry recyclable materials - plastic, metal, glass, paper and card (more information on separating recyclable material is in the 'Separating recyclable waste' section)
- food waste
- black bin waste (residual waste)

Workplaces that generate garden waste have a legal duty to manage it in accordance with the waste hierarchy and arrange for it to be recycled or composted if it delivers the best environmental outcome.

Workplaces can decide on the size of containers and frequency of collections based on the volume of waste they produce. You do not need to provide bins for your customers, however, if you provide bins, you will need to separate dry recyclable waste, food waste and black bin waste.

Workplaces that must follow these rules

Any business or workplace premises that generates waste that is similar in nature and composition to household waste must follow these rules across their operations (including for example, staff kitchens). This includes all relevant non-domestic premises, such as:

- offices
- retail and wholesale
- transport and storage
- hospitality, such as cafes, restaurants, and hotels
- places of education, such as schools, colleges, and universities
- healthcare places, such as GP surgeries and hospitals
- care homes
- charities and those registered as charities
- places of worship
- penal institutes
- charity shops selling donated goods that came from a domestic property
- residential hostels that provide accommodation to people with no other permanent address or who are unable to live at their permanent address only
- premises used only or mainly for public meetings

This is not a complete list and there are others. If you are unsure if the rules apply to your business, you can [check the legislation](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/43/contents) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/43/contents>).

Separating recyclable waste

You need to [separate paper and card \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/separate-collection-of-waste-paper-plastic-metal-and-glass\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/separate-collection-of-waste-paper-plastic-metal-and-glass) from other dry recyclables (plastic, metal and glass), unless your waste collector collects them together. Waste collectors may also choose to collect other dry recyclable materials separately, like glass. You should discuss how your dry recyclable waste will be collected with your chosen waste collector.

You must always separate dry recyclable waste, food waste and black bin waste from each other.

Dry recyclable waste is:

- glass - such as drinks bottles and rinsed empty food jars
- metal - such as drinks cans and rinsed empty food tins, empty aerosols, aluminium foil, aluminium food trays and tubes
- plastic - such as rinsed empty food containers and bottles
- paper and cardboard - such as old newspapers, envelopes, delivery boxes and packaging

Food waste is:

- food leftovers
- waste generated by preparing food (of any volume, including if the workplace does not serve food or have a canteen)

Black bin waste or residual waste is:

- absorbent hygiene products such as nappies
- highly contaminated materials like food packaging that cannot be washed

Finding a waste collector

You should discuss the requirements with your waste collector and arrange separate dry recycling, food waste and black bin waste collection. The waste collector can be a private waste collector or your local authority may also provide services. If your current waste collector does not offer the full range of collection services, you will need to arrange these services from other providers.

You must make sure that the company is [registered on the Public Register of Waste Carriers, Brokers and Dealers \(https://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers%22%20/o%20%22https://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers%22%20/t%20%22_blank\)](https://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers%22%20/o%20%22https://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers%22%20/t%20%22_blank).

Micro-firm exemption until 31 March 2027

Micro-firms need to comply by 31 March 2027.

Micro-firms are workplaces with less than 10 full-time employees in total. This relates to the total number of full time or full-time equivalent employees in a business, rather than in a certain business location. For example, if a business has 3 locations with 5 employees in each location, they have a total of 15 employees. For counting part-time employees, add a fraction based on their pro-rated hours.

Volunteers are not included in determining the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employee count for a business or non-domestic premise. This includes organisations that have volunteers across multiple premises.

Legal requirement for workplaces

Businesses and non-domestic premises have a legal duty to take all reasonable steps to apply the waste hierarchy and the [duty of care \(https://www.gov.uk/managing-your-waste-an-overview/duty-of-care\)](https://www.gov.uk/managing-your-waste-an-overview/duty-of-care) in line with Simpler Recycling. If your landlord employs a waste company for you, or you have a waste management contractor, this company has a legal obligation to make sure any separately collected dry recyclables are sent for recycling and that any residual waste is correctly managed.

If you do not comply with these requirements by 31 March 2025 (or 31 March 2027 for micro firms), you are at risk of receiving a compliance notice from the Environment Agency.

Compliance notices can also be issued against anyone who is not separating waste in agreement with their waste collector. This will often be the waste producers, for example the business, but this may also be the landlords or facilities management companies that are presenting waste on behalf of the waste producer.

It is an offence to fail to comply with a compliance notice and enforcement action may be taken against you in line with the Environment Agency Enforcement and Sanctions Policy.

Legal requirement for waste collectors

Waste collectors have a legal duty to make sure that dry recyclable materials (plastic, metal, glass, paper and card) and food waste are collected separately from residual waste.

Paper and card must be collected separately from plastic, metal and glass. However, if this is not technically or economically practicable, or has no significant environmental benefit, the waste collector can [complete a written co-collection assessment \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/collecting-paper-and-card-with-other-dry-recyclable-materials-written-assessments\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/collecting-paper-and-card-with-other-dry-recyclable-materials-written-assessments).

Compliance notices can also be issued against a waste collector (excluding a Waste Collection Authority) that is not complying with the rules.

Once collected, waste that has been separated for recycling cannot be mixed with other materials of different properties after. Waste separated for recycling cannot be disposed to landfill or incineration.

Support for workplaces and waste collectors

Businesses will continue to pay for their own waste management services. However, Defra will be providing advice and guidance for workplaces as they move to these new recycling rules.

Waste and Resources Action Programme

Defra has funded the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to develop the [Business of Recycling Website \(https://businessofrecycling.wrap.org.uk/\)](https://businessofrecycling.wrap.org.uk/). This provides guidance and resources for specific business sectors and non-domestic premises such as schools and hospitals, on how to make the changes required. The website also includes a waste calculator, that gives businesses the potential costs of their waste collection service, and ideas to improve waste efficiency.

Report non-compliance

From April 2025, the general public and other parties will be able to report workplaces that do not follow these rules to the Environment Agency. Defra will update this guidance with information on how to report non-compliance when it is available.

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