

## Title: 2025 Biennial Report on Solid Waste

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### TONNAGE OF WASTE:

The results of the recent [2023 Vermont Waste Composition Study](#) are similar to the [2018 study](#), showing paper, food waste, and plastics as the most significant portions of Vermont's regular trash (municipal solid waste or "MSW"). **Food waste** disposal as a percent of the MSW stream changed little (19.4% in 2018 to 18.8% in 2023). However, the estimated tonnage of food waste dropped by 13% and the study estimates a Vermont food waste recovery rate of 51%-57%. This rate represents the amount of food and food waste that is recycled or reused (i.e. donated, fed to animals or composted) vs. disposed. Study authors believe these metrics support the effectiveness of the mandated food waste disposal ban.

**Recycling** remains strong in Vermont, with a slight reduction of recyclables found in the waste stream from 12.2% in 2018 to 11.3% in 2023. Vermont also maintained its estimated 72% recycling recovery rate—the amount of recyclables separated for recycling vs. disposed in the trash.

**Construction and demolition debris, bulky goods like mattresses, textiles/clothing, and plastics** are all growing wastes that deserve greater attention.

**Bright Spots:** Single use plastic shopping bags in the waste stream notably dropped 86% from an estimated 2,168 tons in 2018 to 299 tons in 2023. This demonstrates the effectiveness of [Vermont's Single Use Products law](#), which prohibits stores from providing plastic bags at check out.

**TOXICITY OF WASTE:** The Vermont Legislature has supported effective laws and programs that help the state manage the burdens presented by hazardous waste products and dangerous and difficult to manage waste materials like batteries.

**Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Extended Producer Responsibility Program** (EPR): With the passage of [Act 58](#) in 2023, Vermont became the first state to require producers of household hazardous products to cover the safe disposal costs of these dangerous wastes. Among many covered products, this law will also include producers of nicotine vaping products. For more than 30 years, state law has required municipalities to offer collection of HHW and costs have grown significantly. The law was created to help alleviate municipalities' financial burden and also requires producers to complete public education including source and toxics reduction. Currently, producer progress has slowed in preparing to form a stewardship organization by July 1, 2025. The law does not address pesticides which municipalities mention frequently as a costly and difficult to manage waste material.

**Rechargeable Batteries Extended Producer Responsibility Program** (EPR): With the passage of [Act 152](#) of 2024, Vermont expanded its Battery Stewardship Program to include nearly all rechargeable and single-use batteries. This will provide the public, businesses, schools, institutions, waste haulers and

from battery fires, which have become increasingly frequent. In addition, this law requires completion of a study on solutions for the safe and efficient management of battery embedded products, energy storage system batteries and electric vehicle batteries.

**[Mercury Lamp Collection and Recycling Extended Producer Responsibility Program](#)**: In accordance with [10 V.S.A. § 7161](#), the Agency recommends that the General Assembly continue to require implementation of a collection plan by manufacturers of mercury-containing bulbs and lamps. This program helps protect human health and the environment and many of these bulbs are still in use by residents, businesses, and institutions like schools. LED lamps and bulbs make lighting more efficient and less toxic, but it will be many years before all the remaining mercury bulbs and lamps have been replaced and safely collected by this important program.

## **WASTE CHALLENGES:**

**Disasters, Disposal Capacity and Waste Reduction:** The 5-year [2024 Vermont Materials Management Plan](#) (MMP) is effective as of November 30, 2024, and continues many actions with some notable additions:

- a. **Disaster Preparedness:** ANR will continue to work with other state and federal agencies to support towns and solid waste districts with disaster response and collecting hazardous materials and debris. **Solid Waste Management Entities** are required to establish inert debris disposal sites for clean wood, trees, stumps, clean soil/gravel, bricks, and concrete and also establish “Disaster Hazardous Materials Staging Areas”.
- b. **Disposal Capacity:** With years of permitted capacity decreasing at the New England Waste Services of Vermont (NEWSVT) landfill in Coventry, the Agency will initiate a stakeholder process to discuss the future of waste disposal in the State.
- c. **Waste Reduction:** Whatever paths are discussed in the Disposal Capacity process, the State must not waiver in its efforts to reduce, repair, reuse, recycle, compost, and safely manage waste and materials for the benefit of human health and the environment. With help from an EPA grant, ANR will launch a Reduce/Reuse Conference and Network in 2025 to support this industry and help meet long-standing waste reduction goals.

**Bottle Bill & Recycling Systems Analysis:** The current Bottle Bill system is not convenient for Vermonters. The existing beverage container collection system has an inadequate number of collection points, and that number is decreasing as fewer redemption centers are operating in many areas of the state, and many retailers are not redeeming as required by law. With over 100 beverage container brand sorts required to redeem deposits, redemption centers and retailers are struggling with the staff time, space, and systems needed to sort containers, remit deposits, store empties, and coordinate pickup. The current Bottle Bill needs to be modernized to stop brand sorting at the point of redemption and require beverage producers to establish a convenient network of redemption centers.

**Bears:** Conflicts between humans and black bears have increased since 2020, and bears getting into trash have become the most common complaint reported to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (FWD). The Agency is working to educate the public on how to prevent bear conflicts and encourages waste haulers to offer bear-resistant containers and [provides a list of haulers that do on our website](#). Bear-resistant containers can prevent people and bears from being hurt or killed.

**Tires:** Municipalities continue to list tires as a costly waste material that lacks good recycling markets and has ongoing legacy tire piles that are still a concern. While the Agency believes most tires are legitimately managed, two previous studies illustrate these historic issues: [2016 Tire Stakeholder Group](#) and [2013 Report to the Legislature on Problem Scrap Tire Piles](#).