

Customer Exemptions for Organics Collection Service

Guidance for Local Governments in Organics Recycling Collection Areas (ORCA)

Organics Management Group and Food Center

For the
Solid Waste Management Program

Washington State Department of Ecology
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Related Information

- [Organic Recycling Collection Areas webpage](#)¹
- [Focus on Organics Recycling Collection Areas – 2024 Organics Management Laws](#) (Pub. 25-07-015)²

Contact Information

Solid Waste Management Program

Organics Management Group and Food Center, Policy Section

P.O. Box 47600

Olympia, WA 98504-7600

Phone: 360-407-6000

Website³: [Washington State Department of Ecology](#)

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¹ <https://ecology.wa.gov/waste-toxics/reducing-recycling-waste/organics-and-food-waste/2022-organics-management-law/organics-management-for-local-governments>

² <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/SummaryPages/2507015.html>

³ <https://ecology.wa.gov/about-us/contact-us>

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DEPARTMENT OF
ECOLOGY
State of Washington

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Using This Document

This document outlines the process that a hauler or local government must use to exempt customers from the requirements in [Revised Code of Washington \(RCW\) 70A.205.540](#), otherwise known as Organics Recycling Collection Areas (ORCA). We give background for the exemption process and then describe the requirements, application, and review process.

Definitions

- (1) “Composting” has the same meaning as defined in [Washington Administrative Code \(WAC\) 173-350-100](#).
- (2) “Customer” means a person that is responsible for arranging and maintaining solid waste collection service through a hauler for the waste generated by a residence or business.
- (3) “Exemption” means the customer in the ORCA-impacted city or county is not required to subscribe to or pay for curbside organics collection service because the customer is managing their organic materials in a way that creates equal or better environmental outcomes.
- (4) “Home composting” has the same meaning as defined in [Washington Administrative Code \(WAC\) 173-350-100](#).
- (5) “Local government” has the same meaning as defined in [RCW 70A.205.015](#).
- (6) “Organic materials” or “organic (solid) waste” has the same meaning as defined in [Washington Administrative Code \(WAC\) 173-350-100](#).
- (7) “Organic (materials) recycling or salvaging” means a reuse, recycling, or recovery process that diverts organic waste from being incinerated or disposed, including but not limited to wood chipping, composting, anaerobic digestion, vermicomposting, raising black soldier fly, and other animal feed applications.
- (8) “Organic Recycling Collection Area” or “ORCA” means the area of the state identified in RCW 70A.205.540 and [Ecology’s ORCA map](#) where the local government must provide access to organic solid waste collection service to nonresidential customers that generate more than 0.25 cubic yards/50 gallons per week of organic solid waste and all single-family residences.
- (9) “Self-haul” means a customer takes organic materials generated by their household or business to an organic materials management facility, transfer station, or an authorized drop site, so the organic materials are salvaged or recycled, but the customer is not a service provider.
- (10) “Service provider” (or “hauler”) means a company or municipal agency that collects solid waste from residents or businesses within a city or county, including those authorized by a contract, franchise agreement, or ordinance.

Background

Washington passed its first organics management laws in 2022, 2024, and 2025. In 2024, RCW 70A.205.540 created Organics Recycling Collection Areas (ORCAs),⁴ and the Department of Ecology (Ecology) created [a map to show the impacted areas](#). We update the ORCA map every year by September 1.

If a city or part of a county is within the ORCA, state law requires the following groups have access to organics collection service by 2027:

- businesses that generate 0.25 cubic yards/50-gallons or more of organic waste per week
- all single-family residences, including conjoined dwellings with up to four units⁵

If a customer does not have garbage or recycling services (e.g., they self-haul all their waste), they are not required to have organics collection service and do not need an exemption.

Organic materials must end up being recycled or salvaged, not landfilled or burned. By 2030, the organics service is “nonelective” for customers,⁶ and service in the jurisdiction must collect food waste.

In 2025, the Legislature required Ecology to write guidance for ORCA-impacted cities and counties when they grant exemptions to individual customers.⁷ Jurisdictions need to offer customer exemptions by 2030 but can start sooner.

An exemption option for customers is required. Cities and counties may not ban self-hauling organic materials in their jurisdictions.

Local governments are responsible for maintaining customer exemptions unless their agreement with a service provider or other contractor says otherwise. Based on RCW 70A.205.540,

- **Cities** are responsible for managing all parts of the exemption process for applicants whose service address is within their boundaries, and
- **Counties** are responsible for managing the exemption process in unincorporated areas or Urban Growth Areas.

⁴ [Ecology's ORCA webpage](https://ecology.wa.gov/waste-toxics/reducing-recycling-waste/organics-and-food-waste/2022-organics-management-law/organics-management-for-local-governments). <https://ecology.wa.gov/waste-toxics/reducing-recycling-waste/organics-and-food-waste/2022-organics-management-law/organics-management-for-local-governments>

⁵ [RCW 35.87A.020](#) defines “multifamily residential” as “buildings containing four or more residential units.” In general, the requirement applies when a business or residence is responsible for arranging their own solid waste collection service (not a third-party arranging shared service).

⁶ For information on implementing the law, see [Organics Recycling Collection Areas \(ORCA\) Implementation Guidance](#). <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/SummaryPages/2607001.html>

⁷ [Revised Code of Washington 70A.205.540\(1\)\(e\)](#).

Local government interviews

To write statewide guidance, Ecology interviewed staff from cities and counties impacted by the ORCA requirements and a solid waste consultant.

We learned that ORCA-impacted governments share similar concerns. They want to balance customer costs and autonomy, with the administrative need to review and maintain exemptions, and efficient routes for haulers.

Thank you to those listed alphabetically below:

- Bin There Consulting
- City of Auburn
- City of Bellingham
- City of Seattle
- Kitsap County
- Skagit County
- Spokane County
- Walla Walla County
- Whatcom County
- Whitman County

Scope of guidance

Ecology's guidance can only consider exemptions that would result in equal or better environmental outcomes compared to curbside collection of organics. Along with an Assistant Attorney General, Ecology decided only the following are relevant to our direction:

- Self-hauling organic materials
 - To a facility that salvages or recycles the material.
 - To a farm or business as part of a sale or donation.⁸
- Managing organic materials on-site through composting or other similar practice.

Several other exemption options came up during our research and interviews. Most of these are outside the legislative direction. These include exemptions for:

- Part-time occupancy at an address,
- Service during remodeling or change in occupancy,
- Customers who have access to service at their job or another residence,
- Shared containers for customers with low volumes of organic materials, and
- Financial burden.

Ecology's organic materials management [model ordinances](#)⁹ include draft language related to some of these. Only self-hauling and on-site management will be discussed in this guidance. When considering a customer's application to self-haul or to manage their organic materials on-site, local governments must use this guidance.

⁸ The farm or business must reuse or process the purchased or donated organic materials from self-haulers.

⁹ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/SummaryPages/2507003.html>

Additional exemption options besides self-hauling and on-site management will add administrative duties for the local jurisdiction and could change the cost assessment from the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC).

Consider the capacity to manage additional exemptions before adding options for residents and businesses. Be sure to include all types of exemptions in the cost assessment forms for the WUTC.

Refusing service to a customer

In our interviews, many ORCA-impacted cities and counties asked about situations to exempt a customer based on a situation like not being able to get down a driveway. The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission's (WUTC) rule, [Washington Administrative Code \(WAC\) 480-70-366](#),¹⁰ describes situations when a solid waste company can refuse service.

The WUTC also has agreements with solid waste service companies.¹¹ The agreements can define things like container size and weight limits. Solid waste companies may be able to refuse service or charge fees when customers violate part of this agreement like if a cart is too heavy. For more information about these options, [contact the WUTC](#).

Municipal haulers should see their city code to determine when they can refuse service or work with their City Council. Ecology does not require any documentation when a service provider is refusing service under a WUTC rule, another state law, or local ordinance.

Publicizing the exemption

Local programs may choose how to publicize exemptions and make them available. We recommend developing a communication strategy adapted to your community and capacity.

Using this guidance in the Business Organics Management Areas

The law creating the ORCA (RCW 70A.205.540) requires impacted jurisdictions to offer customer exemptions and use this guidance when doing so.

Using this guidance is not required in the Business Organics Management Areas (BOMA).¹²

¹⁰ <https://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=480-70-366>

¹¹ <https://www.utc.wa.gov/regulated-industries/transportation/regulated-transportation-industries/solid-waste-carriers/solid-waste-company-tariffs>

¹² <https://ecology.wa.gov/waste-toxics/reducing-recycling-waste/organics-and-food-waste/2022-organics-management-law/organics-management-for-businesses>

Exemption Applications and Review

Local jurisdictions can develop an application process using the tools and resources they have available, including online or digital forms and third-party contractors; however, the process should ask for all the information discussed in this guidance. The sample application in [Appendix A](#) has the information Ecology recommends collecting, except questions marked “Optional” that also have a blue background.

If possible, we recommend reviewing the sample application in [Appendix A](#) side-by-side with the guidance as you read.

Applicants will be residents or businesses that prefer to self-haul or manage their own organic waste instead of having it collected curbside. The customer will send their completed application to the local jurisdiction or a designee,¹³ who will review it and decide if an exemption is appropriate. Read the [Granting and Maintaining Exemptions](#) section about how to involve a service provider.

The following sections describe each part of the sample exemption application and what to look for when reviewing.

Completed applications for an exemption should be reviewed by qualified staff. The reviewer should have knowledge about organic waste management, organic material processing, nearby facilities, and regulations for handling organic waste.

All applications should get a review and a response within a stated timeline. The local jurisdiction or their designee should follow up with applicants when there are questions about information in the application. For example, if a self-haul applicant says they make a trip to drop off their food waste every other month, then the reviewer should call and ask about how the applicant prevents pests and vectors between drop-offs.

Part 1 – Basic applicant information

Part 1 asks for basic information like:

- Name (of applicant and company, if a business)
- Title of the applicant
- Service and mailing addresses
- Account number (for existing waste collection services)
- Phone number and email address

¹³ A jurisdiction may hire a contractor or their hauler to receive and evaluate exemption applications.

The information in Part 1 is required for applicants. Any granted exemption is based on the applicant's physical location. If the applicant moves, the exemption does not move with them. They must reapply for an exemption at their new address.

Part 1 has an optional section for applicants to share their current service levels for garbage, recycling, and organics collection. For each of these services, an applicant should say how many dumpsters or carts they have, the cart size, how often they are picked up, and the name of the service provider.

Food dehydrators

In Part 1, the applicant must answer whether they use a food dehydrator like those from [Mill](#) or [Lomi](#). If the applicant says yes, they answer a follow-up question about what they do with the dehydrated food waste. How someone uses the dehydrated material determines which part of the application they fill out. If the applicant composts the dehydrated food waste or uses it without further processing, they should complete the on-site management exemption in Part 2. If they send or transport the dehydrated food waste to another site, they should skip Part 2 and complete the self-haul exemption in Part 3.

Reviewing Part 1

Fill in the following information.

1. Address where service is required: Click or tap here to enter text.
2. Mailing address (if different than service address): Click or tap here to enter text.
3. Account number (for current waste services): Click or tap here to enter text.
4. Type of property (check one):
☐ Single-family ☐ Conjoined dwelling (2-4 units), Units: Number of units ☐ Commercial/business
5. Company name (if applicable): Click or tap here to enter text.
6. Applicant name: Click or tap here to enter text.
7. Applicant title (e.g., owner, operator, tenant): Click or tap here to enter text.
8. Applicant phone number: Click or tap here to enter text.
9. Applicant email address: Click or tap here to enter text.
- ☐ I would like a mailed response letter instead of email.

Figure 1 The required information in Part 1 of the sample exemption application asking about the applicant and property.

Make sure the service address, property type, and current service levels are accurate. You may need to ask the service provider. Other information like names and contact details can be assumed correct unless the reviewer has reason to believe it is fraudulent.

Food dehydrators (e.g., Lomi, Mill, etc.)

10. I use a countertop or other type of food dehydrator: ☐ Yes ☐ No

If **yes**, how do you use the dehydrated food waste?

☐ Compost on site (continue to Part 2) ☐ Use on site (e.g., in garden) (fill out Part 2)

☐ Send or take to a location (continue to Part 3) ☐ Other [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Figure 2 Applicants must say whether they use a food dehydrator and, if yes, how they use the dehydrated material. The applicant's answer determines which part of the application they fill out next.

When reviewing an application that involves a food dehydrator, the reviewer has discretion to determine if the proposed use of the dehydrated food waste is sufficient to grant an exemption.

Food dehydration alone may not outrightly provide equal or better environmental outcomes compared to curbside collection. Dehydrated food waste often needs more processing to become a usable product like animal feed or compost.

However, many people with these devices mix the dehydrated food waste directly with soil, use it for vermiculture, or feed it to poultry and livestock. Companies who sell these devices often provide mixing and application rates to use dehydrated food waste in raised garden beds and other scenarios.

Current Service Levels

What level of service do you have for recycling, garbage, and organic waste? Write the number of containers, how often it gets picked up, and your service provider's name for each type of service.

Garbage

How many dumpsters?: # How many carts: # Cart size: How many gallons Pickups per month: #
Service provider name: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Recycling

How many dumpsters?: # How many carts: # Cart size: How many gallons Pickups per month: #
Service provider name: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Organics

How many dumpsters?: # How many carts: # Cart size: How many gallons Pickups per month: #
Service provider name: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Figure 3 Asking for an applicant's current service levels is optional but recommended.

Asking for an applicant's current service information is optional. It may be helpful when reviewing an application to get a larger picture of how solid waste is managed by the customer.

Part 2 – On-site management information

Part 2 is for applicants that want to manage their organic materials on-site instead of having curbside service.

While home and other on-site composters are exempt from notification and reporting requirements, they still need to follow the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) [173-350-220](#), [225](#), and [250](#) Solid Waste Handling Standards for composting, worm bins, and home anaerobic digestors respectively.

To make sure they know about important health and safety guidelines, the applicant must acknowledge some statements about handling solid waste in Washington.

Ecology recommends that applicants provide information about their experience managing organic waste on-site. In the sample application, there is a series of multiple choice and yes-no questions, like how many years of experience an applicant has and whether they have had training or instruction on managing organics (e.g., from Washington State University Extension programs). Asking applicants about education and training is optional.

Applicants must attest they have the legal right to manage organic waste at the site, and answer whether the site is in a public space or used as a thoroughfare, such as an alley. An applicant is expected to consult a property owner or other authority (e.g., homeowners association) before answering yes.

Applicants must confirm the property has adequate space for on-site organics management including any required buffer zones. Jurisdictions should check local codes to see if they affect on-site composting or other management practices. If local laws for home or on-site management exist, the jurisdiction may incorporate more acknowledgements or questions in the application if needed.

Finally, the applicant must describe how they manage organic materials on site. We recommend allowing applicants to write a narrative about their practices.

Photos of at-home management are optional in the sample application, but a jurisdiction may require photo evidence, if they choose.

Reviewing Part 2

Read the following statements. You must agree by checking the boxes to receive an exemption.

- ☐ I believe I meet all requirements to manage my organic waste at my own site and be exempt from curbside collection service.
- ☐ I will manage my organic materials to prevent health and environmental risks (ex: create odors, attract pests, etc.)
- ☐ I will never have more materials on my site at any time than he exemption in [WAC 173-350-220, Table 220-A\(1\)](#)

Figure 4 Applicants for an on-site management exemption must acknowledge certain statements about handling solid waste in Washington State.

An applicant must acknowledge and agree to the statements at the beginning of Part 2 in the sample application. These statements are about Washington's Solid Waste Handling Standards (WAC 173-350).

Do you have the legal right to compost at the site or property? ☐Yes ☐No

Is the location for managing organic waste in a public area or where people travel through (alley, lot, street, parkway, etc.)? ☐Yes ☐No

Does the site have enough space to compost or manage organic waste? ☐Yes ☐No

Do you sell or distribute the finished compost or other product from your on-site management of organic materials? ☐Yes ☐No

How long have you composted or managed organic waste on-site?
☐Less than 2 years ☐2-5 years ☐Longer than 5 years

List any training or classes you've had on managing organic waste, such as a Master Composter program or Compost Facility Operator Training? *List trainings.*

Figure 5 Questions in Part 2 help local governments assess an applicant's experience and what risks might come from granting an exemption. These questions are required except for the ones with a blue background about experience and training.

Some yes-or-no questions in Part 2 are designed to make sure the applicant is legally allowed to compost or manage organic waste at the site, and they are not illegally dumping¹⁴ or processing a volume of organic material that would require additional reporting and notification. If an applicant admits they do not have the legal right to compost at the location or there is not enough space, then deny the application.

Other questions in Part 2 act as a risk assessment to see how much experience and knowledge an applicant has with managing organic materials. Answers to these questions should not be used to deny an exemption.

Reviewing the plan to manage organic material on-site

Describe how you manage organic waste on-site, including how you reduce odors, and pathogens and prevent attracting animals. Estimate the amount and type(s) of organic material you manage (ex: kitchen scraps from two adults and two kids plus garden debris from a single-family lot). Finally, you must also describe what happens with the finished product and whether it goes off-site.

Optional: Attach photos with your application.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Figure 6 For an exemption to manage organic materials on site, the applicant must explain their practices.

Applicants must write a narrative plan about the methods used on-site. Here are the criteria and considerations for reviewing the applicant's plan:

- On-site practices for managing organic material
 - Description of method(s)
 - Operational practices like how materials are layered/mixed, aerated, moistened
- Odor, animal, and pathogen control
 - Things done to prevent or minimize odor
 - Methods to prevent unwanted pests (e.g., flies, rodents, etc.)
 - Steps to keep pets and wild animals out
 - Practices that reduce pathogens (e.g., maintain temperature)
- Estimate of organic material types and volumes
 - Weekly or monthly volume of organic materials managed
 - Type(s) of organic material(s)
 - Source of materials including household size, garden/yard area, etc.
- End use of finished product

¹⁴ [RCW 70A.205.195: Unlawful to dump or deposit solid waste without permit—Penalties—Litter cleanup restitution payment.](#)

- Description of how end-product is used
- Optional supporting documents
 - Photographs
 - Diagrams, sketches, etc.
 - Log sheets or other records for temperature, moisture, etc.

Look for red flags or signs of risk with managing organic waste on site, including:

- Vague or missing information about the compost process
- Practices that may make a pile anaerobic (e.g.: not enough air, too much moisture)
- Large amounts of organic material managed without explaining how it is processed
- Managing high-risk items like meat, dairy, animal or human waste
- Large volumes of finished material being shared or transported off-site
- Composting at a location without legal right
- Proximity to the [apple maggot quarantine](#)

[Appendix B](#) has an optional tool to review on-site management plans. This rubric helps reviewers keep track of when practices may be insufficient or where more information is needed.

If all required elements are addressed and the practices are consistent with Washington’s Solid Waste Handling Standards (chapter 173-350 WAC), approve the narrative portion of the application. If some elements are missing or unclear, ask for clarification or supporting documentation from the applicant before deciding. If the plan suggests risks to public health, safety, or the environment, or appears inconsistent with state or local rules, deny the exemption unless the applicant revises their plan to resolve the concerns.

As the reviewers and decision-makers for applicant exemptions, local governments have discretion when assessing an applicant’s plan to manage organic waste on site. This list of resources may be helpful for application reviews, staff training, and technical assistance.

- [Composting At Home | US EPA](#)
- [Approaches to Composting | US EPA](#)
- [Washington Organic Recycling Council’s Compost User Guide](#)
- [Tilth Alliance Classes](#)
- [Master Composter +Recycling Program | Clallam County | Washington State University](#)
- [Master Recycler Composters | Lewis County | Washington State University](#)
- [Backyard composting & garden amendments - King County, Washington](#)
- [Home Composting: A Guide for Home Gardeners | Penn State](#)

Part 3 – Self-hauling information

The information in Part 3 is required for applicants that want an exemption to self-haul their organic materials instead of having curbside service. Materials must be taken to a solid waste handling facility, farm, or business that salvages or recycles the organic materials. Authorized community drop-sites or transfer stations are also acceptable.

Like the on-site management exemption, applicants must read and agree to statements about their self-hauling activities. Local governments can include other statements or questions about complying with specific local laws as needed in the exemption application.

The applicant must provide a list of the organic materials they plan to self-haul. In 2030, food waste must be included. We use a table in the sample application, but local jurisdictions can use a different structure if the same information is collected. In the sample application, the applicant selects the type of material from a drop-down list. Then, they input the estimated volume of that material (per month), and information about where they will be taking it (site name, address, and contact) and how often (trips per month).

The sample application uses a pre-determined list with the most common items that go in green bins – yard debris, food waste, combined yard and food waste, clean woody debris, food-soiled paper, and certified compostable products. An “other” or write-in option may be necessary. **Local governments should change this list to reflect the organic materials accepted in their program or may choose not to provide a list.** The goal of providing a list was to standardize what applicants select to make it clear for the reviewer.

We recommend that local governments include a list of places in the area where self-haulers can take organic materials like permitted compost facilities.

Reviewing Part 3

Complete Part 3 if you are self-hauling organic material. If you are managing organic material on-site, skip Part 3 and complete Part 2 instead.	
☐	I believe I take all designated organic materials to an acceptable facility, farm, or business that uses the materials without burning or landfilling.
☐	I am following all laws and regulations about storing and transporting my waste, including preventing pests, nuisance odors, securing loads, [and local flow control or City/County code reference].
☐	I agree to maintain records and receipts of my self-hauling activities for at least one (1) year and provide them to the City/County within a reasonable time, if requested.

Figure 7 The sample application's Part 3 (for self-hauling) has the customer acknowledge statements about storing and transporting waste as well as keeping records.

An applicant must acknowledge and agree to the statements at the beginning of Part 3 in the sample application. The statements confirm that an applicant will follow all laws and regulations to store and haul their own organic materials, including securing their load, following flow control requirements, and that they will keep self-hauling records for at least one year. The local government may define specific types of records that must be kept (e.g., photos of each drop-off). Local governments should make it clear to applicants if specific types of records are required.

In the table below, choose the type of organic material from the drop-down, how much you generate per month, where you will take it, and how often. As a self-hauler, you must take all designated organic materials to a facility that salvages or recycles the waste, or a transfer or drop-off location that will forward organic materials to such a facility. You may also sell or donate your organic waste to a farm or business. **Starting in 2030, you must account for food waste in self-hauling activities** (RCW 70A.205.540).

Use decimals if you make less than one trip per month (e.g., 0.5 = 1 trip every other month). As part of their review, staff may contact you to ask how vectors and pests are prevented between trips.

Organic Material	Amount per Month (include unit)	Trips per Month	Self-haul Location	Self-haul Location Address	Self-haul Location Contact
Yard Debris	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Choose an item.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Choose an item.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Figure 8 Self-haul applicants must provide a list of the organic materials they plan to haul, how much per month, and where they plan to take it.

When reviewing where the applicant claims to self-haul organic materials, a reviewer should evaluate the following:

- Types and volumes of organic materials
 - Confirm the applicant identified all likely types of organic materials and their respective volumes generated per month seem reasonable.
 - Food waste must be included starting in 2030.
- Applicants must account for all organic materials to qualify for an exemption. Different material types may be hauled to different locations.
- Destination facility or site is appropriate for the type and volume of organic materials

- Includes permitted composting or anaerobic digestion facilities, agricultural operations that salvage or recycle organic materials, transfer stations or drop-off sites that forward materials to processing facilities are all appropriate.
- Local government staff should use reasonable judgment to determine if the destination is suitable.¹⁵
- If staff question the destination, they should contact the location to verify it is a suitable location for the applicant to self-haul organic materials.
- Make sure that there is a reasonable travel route to the destination facility, so that material does not leave the apple maggot quarantine.¹⁶
- Hauling frequency and storage practices
 - Evaluate whether the applicant is self-hauling often enough so that organic materials do not build up on the property.
 - There is no fixed minimum frequency unless set by local ordinance. Self-hauling must occur as often as necessary to avoid health hazards, nuisance odors, pest issues, or accumulation of waste.
 - Use discretion based on the material types, quantities generated, and how often the applicant claims to haul to the location(s).
 - If the hauling frequency seems insufficient, local governments can request more information or deny the exemption.
 - It is illegal to dump or deposit organic waste without a permit.¹⁷
- Recordkeeping and verification
 - To get an exemption, applicants must keep documentation of their self-hauling activities. Records may include weigh slips, drop-off confirmations, donation logs or emails with the destination site, photos that show drop-off, etc. Applicants who are granted an exemption must keep these for at least one year.
 - Applicants do not need to submit documentation with their application but must provide it upon request by the local government or their service provider.
 - If further verification is needed, staff should follow up with the listed destinations, if necessary.

¹⁵ See WAC 173-350 Table 220(A) for feedstock thresholds at farms and other businesses

¹⁶ [Washington State Department of Agriculture – Apple Maggot Quarantine](#)

¹⁷ [RCW 70A.205.195: Unlawful to dump or deposit solid waste without permit—Penalties—Litter cleanup restitution payment.](#)

Exemption applications should be denied if:

- The applicant refuses to provide complete information on material types, quantities, or destinations.
- The listed destinations are found to not be appropriate or legitimate.
- The proposed hauling frequency is clearly insufficient for the volume of material generated and there is no reasonable plan to store waste safely between trips.

Applicants may reapply with revised information or after correcting deficiencies.

Part 4 – Applicant signature and verification

All applicants need to sign and verify in Part 4. They must agree to:

- Tell the local government and service provider if circumstances change and they no longer qualify for an exemption, so they need curbside organics collection service.
- Cooperate with the local government and/or service provider if a compliance inspection is needed (such as in response to a complaint).
- Understand the exemption may be revoked under justifiable circumstances.

Finally, the applicant must sign and date. By signing, the applicant affirms the information provided in the application is true and correct to the best of their knowledge. If staff from the waste service provider completed the application with a customer, include the staff person's name and signature.

Reviewing Part 4

To be exempt from curbside organics collection service, I/the customer agree/s to the following:

1. To notify the City/County and my service provider if I no longer meet the exemption requirements, in which case the exemption will be rescinded.
2. To cooperate with the City/County and/or the service provider for compliance inspections and enforcement.
3. The City/County may revoke my exemption if they determine any circumstances justifying the exemption no longer apply.

I certify under penalty of perjury under the laws of Washington State that the information provided in and with this form pertains to solid waste and organic materials collection within [City/area of County]. I have reviewed the accuracy of the information, and the information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Applicant name: Click or tap here to enter text. **Applicant title:** Click or tap here to enter text.

Applicant signature: **Date:** Click or tap to enter a date.

If a contracted representative completed this form for an applicant, fill out the following:

Representative name: Click or tap here to enter text. **Title:** Click or tap here to enter text.

Representative signature: **Date:** Click or tap to enter a date.

Figure 9 The applicant must sign and date the application for an exemption in Part 4. If a contractor assists a customer apply for the exemption, they should also sign and date in Part 4.

All applicants must include a signature with their application. If staff from a service provider or contractor complete the application, they must also sign after the customer confirms the information is correct. Applications without a signature are not valid.

Granting and Maintaining Exemptions

Local governments are responsible for maintaining customer exemptions unless their agreement with a service provider or other contractor says otherwise. Based on RCW 70A.205.540,

- **Cities** are responsible for managing all parts of the exemption process for applicants within their boundaries, and
- **Counties** are responsible for managing the exemption process in unincorporated areas or Urban Growth Areas.

City/County Use Only – Residential Application Review	
City/County staff signature:	Date: Click or tap to enter a date.
Exemption Approval (if checked, the application is approved)	
☐ On-site organics management	☐ Self-haul
Exemption Denial (if checked, application is denied)	
☐ Application denied. Reason: Click or tap here to enter text.	

Figure 10 A section in Part 4 of the sample application shows whether the exemption was granted or denied.

The local government should notify customers via email about the status of their exemption, unless they request a mailed response. A response to an applicant must clearly state the decision to grant or deny an exemption.

If an application is denied, the local government must provide written explanation describing why. Exemption denials under this guidance should focus on the environmental tradeoffs between having organic waste collected curbside for the customer versus their plan to self-haul or manage their organic waste on-site.

Exemptions do not transfer. Exemptions are specific to the individual applicant and the address listed in their application. If a customer moves, the new occupant must apply for their own exemption. Likewise, the customer who moved must re-apply for an exemption at their new address. The city or county should develop a strategy with their service provider, so that the exemption is removed when service starts at an address or when there is an occupancy change.

The law does not specify how long an exemption is valid. Local governments can assign a time length before having customers reapply, or exemptions can be valid until a change in circumstance such as new occupancy. If possible, we recommend contacting customers with exemptions at least every two years to ask for updates or changes.

If a customer with an exemption has a change in circumstance that impacts information related to their exemption, the local government must review the changes to confirm the exemption still applies. If an exemption is denied after the customer provides updates, the local government must inform the customer in writing.

Residential exemptions

While cities are responsible for exemptions within their boundaries, cities and counties can coordinate. For example, a county may manage the exemption process on behalf of cities through an interagency agreement or similar.

A local government can also direct their service provider to manage the customer exemption process. In this scenario, a customer could work directly with the service provider to complete the application, and the service provider would maintain all granted exemptions. If a local government wants their service provider to manage any part(s) of the exemption process:

- Call this out clearly in your Solid Waste Management Plan (for local governments using the WUTC certified service provider)¹⁸
- Amend existing contracts or include in bids for new service contracts (for local governments who contract directly with a service provider)
- Discuss how the service provider and city/county will communicate
- Have a clear process for how the local government can access records for customer exemptions

Since local governments are responsible for residential waste services, we recommend local government staff sign letters to grant or deny an exemption, even if the service provider is maintaining exemptions and applications. A denial for a residential exemption application must include a signature from local government staff in the notice.

Business exemptions

Cities and counties have the same responsibilities for business applicants as they do for residential applicants.

However, since commercial waste collection is an open market in Washington, the local government may not have authority to require service providers give a list of exempt businesses. They will need to work closely with the service providers in their area for information about commercial customers and exemptions.

¹⁸ By including additional responsibilities for the service provider (e.g., managing customer exemptions) in the SWMP, the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission can include these activities when they do a cost assessment for the jurisdiction. A cost assessment (also called a *pro forma*) is done when a city or county needs to expand or add services, like providing organics collection service to all single-family residences that receive garbage collection.

If needed, local governments can add a requirement to their Solid Waste Management Plan for all organic waste service providers to tell the county of any granted exemption to a business customer. A city may also adopt similar language in a local ordinance. Local governments may also need to require service providers engage local staff when making decisions about business applications and exemptions. Contact your jurisdiction’s legal counsel to discuss whether these options are needed.

Complaints

The local government must respond to complaints about customers with exemptions if the complaint suggests improper storage or handling of organic materials, which are typically investigated by the jurisdictional health authority. Complaints can also be about any deviation to the customers’ plan that was reviewed when the exemption was granted. This includes but is not limited to nuisance odors; attracting animals, pests, or disease vectors; illegal dumping or accumulation of waste; and deceptively disposing of organic materials in the garbage or landfill.

We recommend local governments inspect an applicant’s site before granting an exemption, but this is not required. Local governments must have a plan for responding to community complaints. This plan may or may not include inspections.

Local governments can look for community partners to help provide technical assistance to customers that receive complaints, such as Washington State University Extension’s Master Recycler-Composter program.

If a customer with an exemption receives complaints and is not responsive to training or technical assistance, the local government may revoke the exemption. The applicant agreed to this in Part 4 of the sample application with their final signature and verification. If an exemption is revoked, the customer must receive and pay for¹⁹ curbside organics collection service.

¹⁹ Service becomes “non-elective” for customers in the Organics Recycling Collection Areas in 2030 (RCW 70A.205.540). In some areas, customers may opt out of all solid waste collection services and self-haul all their waste without an exemption.

Appendix A – Sample Exemption Application

Local governments should ask applicants for **all** the information in this sample application except questions with a blue highlight. Blue highlights show where the local government should customize or when collecting information is optional.

Background

Businesses that generate more than 0.25 cubic yards/50 gallons of organic waste per week in [City/part of County] and all single-family residences in [City/part of County] must have curbside organics collection service. This is required by state law (RCW 70A.205.540) and [County/City Code and/or the County's Solid Waste Management Plan]. Confirm your residence or business address is within the [Organics Recycling Collection Area \(ORCA\) with Ecology's map](#).

List of Organic Materials

- Yard debris
- Clean wood waste
- Food waste and food scraps
- [Food soiled paper]
- [Certified compostable products]

Starting January 1, 2030, state law says some residents and businesses must have their yard and food waste collected and taken to a facility that makes compost, biogas, animal feed, or another recycled product and pay for the service if necessary. Having your organic waste collected curbside is the easiest way to manage it. **If you do not receive garbage and recycling collection service, you do not need to have service for organics or an exemption.**

The City/County may exempt residents and businesses from having food and yard waste collection service. State law says City/County must grant an exemption when a customer manages organic waste in a way that creates equal or better environmental outcomes than curbside collection, including:

- Composting or equivalent management practice(s) at home or at a business.
- Self-hauling organic waste to a facility that salvages or recycles it, e.g. compost or anaerobic digestion facility.
- Selling or donating organic waste to a business for their use.
- [Residences that meet other exemption criteria in local rules or code.]

Definitions

Certified compostable products – Food serviceware, food adjacent packaging, or other products verified to meet scientific standards for safely breaking down in an industrial composting environment that also meet chapter 70A.455 RCW, Plastic Product Degradability.

Clean wood waste – Untreated and unpainted wood or wood products that are free of chemicals, preservatives, or treatments, including untreated lumber, tree stumps, and tree limbs. Clean wood waste may or may not be pierced by nails or other metal fasteners.

Food waste and food scraps – Food intended for human consumption that is discarded or remnants of food preparation and consumption, including peels, trimmings, bones, and other inedible or leftover parts.

Food soiled paper – Compostable paper material that has come in contact with food, food scraps, or liquid, including but not limited to napkins, paper towels, paper plates, and wrappings.

Yard debris – Plant material often created when maintaining yards, gardens and through horticulture, gardening, landscaping or similar activities. Yard debris includes, but is not limited to, grass clippings, leaves, branches, brush, weeds, flowers, roots, windfall fruit, and vegetable garden debris.

Available Exemptions and Criteria

On-site management	All organic materials from your residence or business are composted on site (or you use a similar practice on site). Home composting and any other way you manage organic waste must follow relevant laws and rules, including Washington’s Solid Waste Handling Standards . You cannot put organic materials in a recycling or garbage container.
Self-haul	All designated organic materials (above) generated at your residence or business are separated from garbage and recycling. Organic waste is taken to a facility that salvages or recycles the materials or taken to an authorized drop-off site for organic materials. You can also sell or donate designated organic materials to a farm or business for them to use.
[Other]	[City/County may add additional exemptions to this application]

How to apply for an exemption

1. Complete Part 1 of the application. City, county, or service provider staff may complete this application on behalf of a customer, but the customer must sign the application.
2. Parts 2 and 3 of the application are different based on how you handle your organic material. Complete the section based on your plan.
3. Complete and sign Section 4.
4. Compile any necessary documents. Send documents and the signed application to [email@email.com].
 - a. [City/County] Staff may need to do a site visit to verify information.

5. A confirmation email from [City/County] will let you know if the exemption has been approved or denied. You can expect to hear from us [x weeks] after your application has been submitted. We will email the address listed in Part 1, unless it is missing, or you request a mailed letter.

[City/County] staff may confirm the status of your exemption as often as every year. Updates to this information in this application may be part of the review process.

Part 1 – Property and Contact Information

Fill in the following information.

1. Address where service is required: Click or tap here to enter text.
2. Mailing address (if different than service address): Click or tap here to enter text.
3. Account number (for current waste services): Click or tap here to enter text.
4. Type of property (check one):

☐ Single-family ☐ Conjoined dwelling (2-4 units), Units: Number of units ☐ Commercial/business

5. Company name (if applicable): Click or tap here to enter text.
6. Applicant name: Click or tap here to enter text.
7. Applicant title (e.g., owner, operator, tenant): Click or tap here to enter text.
8. Applicant phone number: Click or tap here to enter text.
9. Applicant email address: Click or tap here to enter text.

☐ I would like a mailed response letter instead of email.

Food dehydrators (e.g., Lomi, Mill, etc.)

10. I use a countertop or other type of food dehydrator: ☐ Yes ☐ No

If **yes**, how do you use the dehydrated food waste?

- ☐ Compost on site (continue to Part 2) ☐ Use on site (e.g., in garden) (fill out Part 2)
☐ Send or take to a location (continue to Part 3) ☐ Other Click or tap here to enter text.
-

Current Service Levels

What level of service do you have for recycling, garbage, and organic waste? Write the number of containers, how often it gets picked up, and your service provider's name for each type of service.

Garbage

How many dumpsters?: # How many carts: # Cart size: How many gallons Pickups per month: #
Service provider name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Recycling

How many dumpsters?: # How many carts: # Cart size: How many gallons Pickups per month: #
Service provider name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Organics

How many dumpsters?: # How many carts: # Cart size: How many gallons Pickups per month: #
Service provider name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Part 2 – Exemption to manage organic materials on-site

Complete Part 2 if you are managing organic material on-site. If you are self-hauling organic material, skip Part 2 and complete Part 3 instead.

Read the following statements. You must agree by checking the boxes to receive an exemption.

- ☐ I believe I meet all requirements to manage my organic waste at my own site and be exempt from curbside collection service.
- ☐ I will manage my organic materials to prevent health and environmental risks (ex: create odors, attract pests, etc.)
- ☐ I will never have more materials on my site at any time than the exemption in [WAC 173-350-220, Table 220-A\(1\)](#)

Do you have the legal right to compost at the site or property? ☐Yes ☐No

Is the location for managing organic waste in a public area or where people travel through (alley, lot, street, parkway, etc.)? ☐Yes ☐No

Does the site have enough space to compost or manage organic waste? ☐Yes ☐No

Do you sell or distribute the finished compost or other product from your on-site management of organic materials? ☐Yes ☐No

How long have you composted or managed organic waste on-site?

- ☐Less than 2 years ☐2-5 years ☐Longer than 5 years

List any training or classes you've had on managing organic waste, such as a Master Composter program or Compost Facility Operator Training? [List trainings.](#)

Describe how you manage organic waste on-site, including how you reduce odors, and pathogens and prevent attracting animals. Estimate the amount and type(s) of organic material you manage (ex: kitchen scraps from two adults and two kids plus garden debris from a single-family lot). Finally, you must also describe what happens with the finished product and whether it goes off-site.

Optional: Attach photos with your application.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Part 3 – Exemption to self-haul organic materials

Complete Part 3 if you are self-hauling organic material. If you are managing organic material on-site, skip Part 3 and complete Part 2 instead.

- ☐ I believe I take all designated organic materials to an acceptable facility, farm, or business that uses the materials without burning or landfilling.
- ☐ I am following all laws and regulations about storing and transporting my waste, including preventing pests, nuisance odors, securing loads, [and local flow control or City/County code reference].
- ☐ I agree to maintain records and receipts of my self-hauling activities for at least one (1) year and provide them to the City/County within a reasonable time, if requested.

In the table below, choose the type of organic material from the drop-down, how much you generate per month, where you will take it, and how often. As a self-hauler, you must take all designated organic materials to a facility that salvages or recycles the waste, or a transfer or drop-off location that will forward organic materials to such a facility. You may also sell or donate your organic waste to a farm or business. **Starting in 2030, you must account for food waste in self-hauling activities** (RCW 70A.205.540).

Use decimals if you make less than one trip per month (e.g., 0.5 = 1 trip every other month). As part of their review, staff may contact you to ask how vectors and pests are prevented between trips.

Organic Material	Amount per Month (include unit)	Trips per Month	Self-haul Location	Self-haul Location Address	Self-haul Location Contact
Yard Debris	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Choose an item.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Choose an item.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Organic Material	Amount per Month (include unit)	Trips per Month	Self-haul Location	Self-haul Location Address	Self-haul Location Contact
Choose an item.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Choose an item.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Nearby Facilities

Local governments can provide a list of permitted organics management facilities that can receive organic waste from residents or businesses. For a state list of permitted and permit-exempt facilities, see [Ecology’s website](#).²⁰

²⁰ <https://ecology.wa.gov/waste-toxics/reducing-recycling-waste/organics-and-food-waste/managing-organics-compost>

Part 4 – Application verification

To be exempt from curbside organics collection service, I/the customer agree/s to the following:

1. To notify the City/County and my service provider if I no longer meet the exemption requirements, in which case the exemption will be rescinded.
2. To cooperate with the City/County and/or the service provider for compliance inspections and enforcement.
3. The City/County may revoke my exemption if they determine any circumstances justifying the exemption no longer apply.

I certify under penalty of perjury under the laws of Washington State that the information provided in and with this form pertains to solid waste and organic materials collection within [City/area of County]. I have reviewed the accuracy of the information, and the information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Applicant name: Click or tap here to enter text. **Applicant title:** Click or tap here to enter text.

Applicant signature:

Date: Click or tap to enter a date.

If a contracted representative completed this form for an applicant, fill out the following:

Representative name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Title: Click or tap here to enter text.

Representative signature:

Date: Click or tap to enter a date.

City/County Use Only – Residential Application Review

City/County staff signature:

Date: Click or tap to enter a date.

Exemption Approval (if checked, the application is approved)

☐ On-site organics management

☐ Self-haul

Exemption Denial (if checked, application is denied)

☐ Application denied. Reason: Click or tap here to enter text.

Appendix B – On-site Management Plan Review Tool

This tool is to help local government staff assess an applicant’s narrative when they apply for an on-site composting exemption. This rubric helps determine where someone’s practices might pose risks and where more information is needed.

Criteria	Sufficient	Need more information	Not sufficient	Notes
Describes management method clearly	☐	☐	☐	
Explains how odor is managed	☐	☐	☐	
Identifies controls for pests and animals	☐	☐	☐	
Describes ways to minimize pathogens	☐	☐	☐	
Estimates volume and types of materials	☐	☐	☐	
Materials are reasonable for household and garden/yard size and composition	☐	☐	☐	
Explains what happens to end-product	☐	☐	☐	
Compost or end-product leaves site	☐	☐	☐	
Provides photos or other support (optional)	☐	☐	☐	
[add other criteria as needed]				