

Workplace Recycling Law in Wales

Who should read this guide?

The new recycling law applies to all workplaces in Wales. This guide is a summary of the changes and how you can get ready.

The new law comes into effect on 6 April 2024. It means all workplaces such as businesses, public sector and charities will need to separate their recyclable materials in the same way households already do.

It also applies to all waste and recycling collectors and processors who manage household-like waste from workplaces.

What is the new law?

Workplaces will need to separate the materials listed below for recycling. Workplaces will also need to arrange for the waste to be collected separately from other waste.

- Paper and card
- Glass
- Plastic, cartons, metal and other similar packaging (for example coffee cups)
- Food – only for premises that produce more than 5kg of food waste a week.
- Unsold small waste electrical and electronic equipment (sWEEE)
- Unsold textiles.

Putting all your waste into a single bin for collection will not be allowed if any of these materials are in there.

Each group of materials will need to be separated for recycling. For example, glass must be presented for collection on its own, but workplaces can present metal, plastic and cartons together in the same container.

Bans on how to dispose of food and waste

The new law also includes bans on:

- sending any amount of food waste to sewers
- any waste that has been separated for recycling going to landfill or incineration plants (except most textiles which may go to incineration plants apart from unsold textiles that can't go to incineration or landfill)
- sending any wood waste to landfill

For workplaces that produce and handle food waste

The law to separate and recycle food waste applies to any premises that produce over 5kg of food waste per week, such as:

- hotels
- restaurants
- cafés
- takeaways
- shopping centre food courts
- catering businesses (including those at events such as food stalls)
- canteens
- pubs
- offices with canteens, cafes or staff kitchen facilities
- schools, colleges, prisons, nursing homes and hospitals
- any other workplace that serves food

If you produce any food waste you will not be allowed to put it down the sink, or drain into a public drain or sewer.

This includes using macerators (or similar technologies such as enzyme digestors or de-waterers) to get rid of food waste down the sink to a drain or sewer. Macerators don't need to be removed, but you may choose to remove them to prevent staff using them.

For information on how to manage your food waste that may help your workplace try searching online for:

Guardians of Grub

WRAP Food Waste Reduction Roadmap Toolkit

Why is the law being introduced and what are the benefits?

Wales is currently third in the world when it comes to recycling waste from households. The recycling rate of waste materials collected by local authorities is currently at just over 65% and helps save around 400,000 tonnes of carbon emissions each year.

The aim is to build on the success of household recycling and ensure high recycling rates across workplaces too.

The benefits of increasing recycling are it:

- ✓ **Increases the amount and quality of recycling that can then be used by Welsh manufacturers**
- ✓ **Supports workplaces to reduce their waste**
- ✓ **Reduces carbon emissions**
- ✓ **Helps the economy to create a greener Wales**

Here are some actions you should start taking

- 1 Have a conversation with your recycling and waste collector** to make sure they can collect your separated recycling. You may want to contact other waste collectors to choose the most suitable services for you at the best price.
- 2 Look at where, how and why waste is created on your premises.** Can you reuse any items before putting it in the recycling bin? You might be able to change how you buy products to help reduce the amount of waste you create in the first place. Think about whether you can reduce the materials you use that might be difficult to recycle.
- 3 Think about what internal and external bins you might need.** Look at what containers you will need for the different recycling materials inside and outside your premises. Your waste collector should be able to advise on the best mix of external containers and how often they will be collected. It is better, and often easier, to separate materials for recycling as soon as they have been used, rather than trying to separate them later. The different types of recycling materials must be separated for your waste collector to be able to take them away. Try to make it easier for staff and visitors to recycle than to put things in the general waste bin.
- 4 Talk to your staff so that they know about the new law.** They may have ideas about how to make things work. There will be materials such as posters, signs for internal bins and staff training materials available to help you. Making changes in your business or organisation will be easier if people understand why things are changing.
- 5 Make sure your recycling bins are accessible.** It's important that your bins are accessible for all your customers, for example putting them in places that are accessible to wheelchair users.
- 6 Think about staff health and safety.** Try to make sure your waste storage and how you move it minimises the risk of accidents. It is important that bins, and waste storage areas are the right size, easy to access, easy to move and do not block emergency exits. There may be restrictions on waste containers left outside your premises so be aware as it is likely you will have more bins being collected.

How the law will be enforced

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) is responsible for making sure that materials are being separated and collected correctly, and that the ban on recycling going to incineration and landfill is being followed.

Local Authorities are responsible for making sure the ban on food waste going to sewer is followed.

If you do not comply with the law, it could mean a fine for your workplace.

Who is responsible for following the new law?

All workplaces in Wales will be required to follow the new law. The business, public body or charity may own the premises, they may lease or rent it, or temporarily occupy it.

It is the occupiers of a workplace who must ensure recycling is separated for collection. If multiple workplaces are in a shared location, each individual business or organisation is responsible but may need to agree with the landlord or facilities manager if a central recycling system is needed.

Recycling containers and storage

Not all waste service providers charge to hire bins. If the new law means you need more bins, then you'll need to factor this into your costs. Some specialist food waste collectors offer a service where full bins are swapped for empty bins.

Make sure your external bins are appropriately labelled and secure.

How to get ready

The law comes into effect from 6 April 2024. However, the earlier you can prepare the better.

You will need to think about how you manage your waste. This means putting systems in place in your workplace and that your waste collector is able to meet your needs.

It is important to read the draft Code of Practice on the Separate Collection of Waste Materials for Recycling (available online at www.gov.wales/workplacerecycling) which has more detail about how to comply with the law to separate waste and keep it separate for recycling.

If you are already separating your waste for recycling, or you are a collector who already offers separate collections, a check against the Code of Practice may be all that you need to do. Take care checking the lists of materials that can and cannot be mixed. The final Code of Practice will be available online at www.gov.wales/workplacerecycling later this year.

Designing out waste

You may be able to return packaging to your suppliers to be reused or recycled.

As more waste is recycled you could reduce the size of your general waste containers or how often they are collected. This could potentially save you money.

Further support and guidance

WRAP (the Waste and Resources Action Programme) and the Welsh Government will be providing more information between now and April 2024 to help you get ready here:

www.gov.wales/workplacerecycling

This will include:

- Examples of how other workplaces are already recycling in this way.
- **Online webinars**
- **Downloadable communication resources, for example bin signs and posters to use in your premises.**
- Guides for certain types of workplaces with more detail about how to get ready including:
 - **Hospitality and food services**
 - **Retail**
 - **Small and medium size businesses (SMEs)**
 - **Education settings and universities**
 - **Residential settings (including care homes)**
 - **Outdoor events (for example festivals)**
 - **Entertainment and leisure facilities (including campsites, chalets, lodges, hotels, caravans)**

You can find more information now on the Welsh Government's website here:

www.gov.wales/workplacerecycling

- including the Code of Practice which gives you more detailed information about the changes.