

## Organic Matter Recycling Regulation Amendment - Backgrounder

### **Background**

On June 9, 2016, the Ministry of Environment (MOE) amended the [Organic Matter Recycling Regulation](#) (OMRR) with respect to larger composting facilities. In addition to meeting the requirements of the OMRR, composting facilities that meet the following criteria now also require a permit:

- process food waste or biosolids, and
- have the design capacity to produce over 5,000 tonnes or greater of compost per year.

For reference, 5,000 tonnes is the equivalent of 400 truck loads of finished compost.

*Question: Why did government make these changes?*

One way for local governments to save space in their landfills is to divert organics to composting facilities. The ministry is anticipating that this will increase the number and size of composting facilities.

Adding a permitting process for the larger facilities will increase transparency and allow independent statutory decision makers to put conditions in place to better monitor compliance. Permit conditions will allow for site-specific requirements to: reduce environmental impacts; address and reduce impacts from odour; and address concerns regarding public notification under OMRR.

*Question: I live near a compost facility. What does this mean for me?*

If the facility meets the criteria above, you will have the opportunity to provide feedback as part of the permit application process.

*Question: How can the composting of organic waste impact greenhouse gas (GHG) production?*

GHG emissions can be reduced by redirecting organic waste into composting systems as compared to landfilling organics. For example, decomposing organic matter in a landfill typically releases large amounts of methane, which is a powerful greenhouse gas (approximately 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide). Composting on the other hand, releases mostly carbon dioxide, and very little methane (or other greenhouse gases). Therefore, there is a net GHG reduction benefit associated with composting. This is particularly true if the landfill does not have adequate landfill gas capture and utilization systems.

### **Composting Operations**

*Question: When do I have to apply for a permit?*

Facilities that meet the criteria above will have 60 days to apply for a permit. The deadline to apply for a permit is August 8, 2016. Facilities will continue to be authorized under OMRR while their permit application is being adjudicated.

*Question: Where can I find information about applying for a permit?*

If you currently have a facility registered with the MOE, you will receive a registered letter providing additional details and instructions on the permitting process. Information on the permit process can be also be found at: [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/waste-management/waste-discharge-authorization](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/waste-management/waste-discharge-authorization).

*Question: I am not sure if what I process is considered "food waste". Do these rules apply to me?*

Food waste is defined in [Schedule 12](#) of OMRR as "recyclable food for humans that has been diverted from residential, commercial or institutional sources." It does not include fish, meat, or poultry waste, or plant matter derived from processing plants.

*Question: I am a farmer that uses on-farm composting? Do these changes affect me?*

It depends. If you are doing on-farm composting in accordance with the [Agricultural Waste Control Regulation](#), then no. If you run a commercial composting operation which is subject to the OMRR, then the changes will affect you if you meet the criteria above.

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*Question: Are facilities located on federal land subject to the requirements under OMRR?*

For existing facilities, if a site was not subject to OMRR requirements before June 8, 2016, nothing has changed, i.e., they are not subject now, solely as a result of the change.

For new facilities, the answer is "it depends". Ministry staff would need to review each situation to consider factors such as: facility ownership; whether a lease is involved, and the terms and conditions of that lease, and; whether there are any emissions or discharges potentially impacting non-federal land, e.g., land under provincial jurisdiction.

## **Local Government**

*Question: We operate a large biosolids composting facility which is included in our regional district's solid waste management plan. Do we need a permit?*

Exemptions exist for compost facilities that are part of a regional district's solid waste management plan (SWMP) and have been issued an operational certificate by the ministry. You do not need a permit. If you wish to obtain an operational certificate, please contact Liz Freyman at [Liz.Freyman@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Liz.Freyman@gov.bc.ca) for more information.

*Question: Our regional district requires waste stream management licences for our compost facilities. Do we still need to apply for a permit?*

If your facilities meet the criteria above, you will be required to apply for a permit even if the facility is licenced. Exemptions exist only for facilities operating under an approved SWMP with an approved operational certificate.

Regional districts may continue to issue waste stream management licences, provided that the licence conditions do not conflict with the: [Environmental Management Act](#), the OMRR, or the conditions set out in the permit for each respective facility.



For more information on the OMRR or this amendment, please visit:

[www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/waste-management/recycling/organics/regulations-guidelines](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/waste-management/recycling/organics/regulations-guidelines)