



# How to track your waste

## Strategies for tracking waste, recycling, and organics

Knowing how much waste is generated, and how much waste is captured through recycling and composting is essential to evaluating how well your program performs.

Using one of the tracking options below, the recycling team should start tracking and collecting data about the school's solid waste program and continue for at least a year after your program is implemented.

### Tracking options

There are three options for gathering data about your solid waste program. They are listed from most-preferred to least-preferred, based on the quality and ease of collecting the data.

#### 1. Use hauler to weigh materials

Institutions can negotiate with their trash hauler to weigh the trash, recycling, and organics (if applicable). Some haulers have trucks outfitted with scales. Institutions that receive this service have typically included provisions in the contract with their waste hauler for collecting and reporting weights. As with any contract provision, it's important to periodically monitor and assess if the tracking and reporting is meeting the standards set within the contract. Some haulers may charge more for this service, and others may not offer it.

For a contract template language that includes provisions on reporting, visit MPCA's Resource management webpage at [www.pca.state.mn.us/resourcemanagement](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/resourcemanagement).

#### 2. Monitor and track volume of waste

To track the volume of waste, the recycling team or the waste hauler will need to look into the waste, recycling, and organics dumpster or cart to determine how much material is there. When collecting the data, be sure to include the size of the container, type of material, and volume (such as 25%, 50%, full).

The waste and recycling tracking worksheet can help you with the volume-to-weight conversion. The formulas in the worksheet will convert the number of carts or dumpsters in to weights for you.

Tip: Read the example tab before you use the worksheet.

For questions or need help with using the spreadsheet, contact Tim Farnan, 651-757-2348.

### 3. Review hauler bills

Review the waste hauler bill to help you determine the size of containers that are used and how frequently they are collected. Then, multiply the total number of cubic yards of material collected by the density for each material type, listed in the table:

Material type	Density (lb/cu yard)
Mixed paper recycling	484
Bottles and cans	200
Single stream recycling	139
Cardboard	100
Trash	125

**Note:** a 96-gallon container is .553 cubic yards

Multiply your container size by the number of collections in the timeframe you are evaluating, then multiply the total number of cubic yards by the appropriate density (table above) to estimate how much material was collected.

**Example:**

Lakewood Elementary has a 4-cubic yard trash dumpster picked up twice every week. To estimate how much trash they generated for six months, they used the following calculation:

- 4 cubic yards x 2 (collections per week) = 8 cubic yards of trash collected each week
- 8 (cubic yards) x 26 weeks (six months) = 208 cubic yards of trash
- 208 (cubic yards) x 125 lbs. (from table above) = 26,000 lbs. of trash in six months.