

Guidance for Compost Facilities Following an Acceptable Solution

General

This guidance document outlines the requirements for establishing, operating and closing compost facilities following the acceptable solution under the Compost Facility Chapter of the Saskatchewan Environmental Code.

- **Small facilities:** Facilities following the acceptable solution and accepting less than 100 cubic metres (m³) of only leaf and yard waste annually should consult the Guidance for Compost Facilities Accepting Less Than 100 m³ of Only Leaf and Yard Waste Annually.
- **Large facilities:** Facilities accepting more than 15,000 tonnes of feedstock and/or amendment annually must follow the alternative solution. Please see Guidance for Compost Facilities Following an Alternative Solution for details.
- **General guidance:** For general information, refer to the Compost Facility General Guidance document.

Under the acceptable solution, owners can notify the Ministry of Environment and submit related documents for construction, operation or closure without needing approval. The ministry will review these documents during inspections or compliance audits.

Requirements

Parts 1 and 3 of the Compost Facility Chapter apply to compost facilities following an acceptable solution. Part 1 details the general requirements all compost facilities must follow. Part 3 details the requirements for a facility following an acceptable solution.

Non-municipal or privately owned composting facilities may require financial assurance as required by the *Environmental Management and Protection (General) Regulations*, Sections 8(2)(o) and 9(1).

Note: As per 1(5) of the chapter, an owner of a compost facility that is operating a permitted compost facility on the day on which this chapter comes into force is not required to comply with the siting, design and construction requirements set out in the chapter, unless the owner of the compost facility is expanding the compost facility or the operation of the compost facility on this site may cause an adverse environmental effect, but all other requirements apply.

Compost Facilities Acceptable Feedstock and Amendment Standard

The Compost Facilities Acceptable Feedstock and Amendment Standard is used concurrently with the chapter. Facilities following the acceptable solution and wishing to accept materials not on the list should contact the ministry to ensure they can accept those materials without using the alternative solution.

Providing a Notification

When must facility owners provide a notification?

1. By October 1, 2025, for facilities that began operations before the chapter came into force;
2. Anytime a new facility begins operations; or
3. Anytime a facility expands its operations or its property boundary.

How do facility owners provide a notification?

A notification is provided when required documents are uploaded to the Environment Business Services portal. The ministry will provide a notification number and register the facility in a database.

What documents should facility owners upload to the portal as a notification?

The list of documents to submit when providing a notification is presented in Table 1. A description of each report is found in Table 2. The Compost Facility Notification Form is to be included within the notification submission.

Table 1 – Reports to submit when providing a notification to the ministry

Reports	Transitioning an existing compost facility (until October 1, 2025)	Establishing a new compost facility or expanding an existing compost facility (anytime)	Certified by a qualified person?
Operations plan	Yes	Yes	No
Emergency response plan	Yes	Yes	No
Environmental monitoring plan	Yes	Yes	Yes
Site suitability report	No	Yes	Yes
Design plan, including a decommissioning and reclamation plan	No	Yes	Yes

Are owners of compost facilities located at a landfill required to provide a notification?

Yes. Landfills are permitted under *The Municipal Refuse Management Regulations* or *The Environmental Management and Protection Act, 2010*. Landfill owners who wish to compost at their facilities must comply with the chapter and applicable landfill legislation. Landfill owners who wish to add a compost facility or combine facilities at the time of initial design must notify the ministry about the compost facility and apply separately for landfill construction and operation permits.

What will happen with the existing composting facility permits?

Before the chapter came into force, most compost facilities were regulated under *The Municipal Refuse Management Regulations* through landfill permits. Landfill permits are not affected by the chapter and continue to be active. However, the ministry will eventually be updating these permits to align with the new chapter, removing any references to compost management.

Environmental Monitoring

Is environmental monitoring required?

Yes. All compost facilities following the acceptable solution are required to implement an environmental monitoring plan and provide a copy upon notification. The plan should be implemented at the next applicable monitoring season if not already established. Note: Facilities accepting less than 100 m³ of yard and leaf waste do not require a groundwater monitoring plan.

New compost facilities are required to establish background groundwater quality before starting operations. Parameters are outlined within Appendix B of the code chapter and include arsenic, ammonia, barium, calcium, boron, chemical oxygen demand, cadmium, chloride, chromium, electrical conductivity, copper, magnesium, iron, nitrate-nitrogen, lead, pH, manganese, potassium, mercury, sodium, vanadium, sulphate, total coliform, total dissolved solids, total kjeldahl nitrogen, total organic carbon and total phosphorus. Sampling must occur annually, as outlined in 3-8(3).

Other activities on-site (e.g. a landfill) may also require a water monitoring program. Some wells may be used for more than one activity at a site. Facility owners may prepare a joint environmental monitoring report but must interpret all activities separately to ensure that each reporting requirement is complete. The report should identify each activity, trends and likely causes if contamination is identified.

Report Submission Schedule

Every compost facility owner must prepare reports to submit to the Environment Business Services portal at specific times. Table 2 lists reports that compost facilities following an acceptable solution must submit to the ministry. The ministry may review these reports during inspections or compliance audits.

Table 2 – Report submission schedule for compost facilities following an acceptable solution

Report	Purpose of the report	Reporting schedule
With Notification and Prior to Construction (If Applicable)		
Site suitability report	Presents the location and setbacks and describes the site-specific design required for protecting the environment. This report includes engagement or consultation with adjacent landowners, stakeholders and anyone impacted by the facility's operations. Includes a qualified person certificate. See Sections 3-2 and 3-3 for specific content. This information may be included in the design plan.	Upon notification pursuant to Section 1-3 for a new or expanding facility

Design plan	Describes the design intent, which includes construction specifications, site plans, site maps with appropriate contours and a summary of the components included in the design to achieve the design plan's intent. Owners must ensure all applicable regulations are followed, including but not limited to this chapter, building codes, local by-laws, etc. This report includes details of the quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) testing that will be performed. Drawings must be stamped and sealed by a qualified person. Includes a qualified person certificate. See Section 3-4 for specific content. Please note that the design plan includes preparing a decommissioning and reclamation plan.	Upon notification pursuant to Section 1-3
Operations Plan	Describes compost facility procedures and protocols for the day-to-day operational activities, including documentation checklists and other forms for record keeping. See subsection 3-6 for specific content.	Upon notification pursuant to Section 1-3, then upon request
Emergency Response Plan	Identifies potential emergencies and incidents at the compost facility that could harm people or cause environmental deterioration. Details the actions necessary to mitigate the impacts of those activities. This report can also be included as part of an operations plan rather than as a separate plan. See subsection 3-6 for specific content.	Upon notification pursuant to Section 1-3, then upon request
Environmental monitoring plan	Outlines the procedures for detecting potential releases of substances that may cause environmental impacts, overseen by a qualified person and tailored to site-specific conditions. The plan may include the installation of monitoring systems (e.g. groundwater monitoring wells) or other environmental controls (e.g. for surface water run-ons, run-offs, discharge or ponding, or stormwater controls); environmental sampling to be conducted (e.g. the parameters, frequency and interpretation of results) and reporting to the ministry. Includes a qualified person certificate. See sections 1-7, 3-8 and 3-9.	Upon notification pursuant to Section 1-3
Following Construction (If Applicable)		
Construction verification	Describes the construction of infrastructure at the site as submitted in the design plan. Once construction is completed as per the design plan, the ministry must be notified via submission of the construction verification report that contains quality assurance documentation and construction completion report. Includes a qualified person certificate. See Section 3-5.	Submit within 90 days of construction completion
While in Operation		

Operations Plan	Describes compost facility procedures and protocols for the day-to-day operational activities, including documentation checklists and other forms for record keeping. See subsection 3-6 for specific content.	Upon notification pursuant to Section 1-3, then upon request
Emergency Response Plan	Identifies potential emergencies and incidents at the compost facility that could harm people or cause environmental deterioration. Details the actions necessary to mitigate the impacts of those activities. This report can also be included as part of an Operations Plan rather than as a separate plan. See subsection 3-6 for specific content.	Upon notification pursuant to Section 1-3, then upon request
Environmental monitoring plan	Outlines the procedures for detecting potential releases of substances that may cause environmental impacts, overseen by a qualified person and tailored to site-specific conditions. The plan may include the installation of monitoring systems (e.g. groundwater monitoring wells) or other environmental controls (e.g. for surface water run-ons, run-offs, discharge or ponding, or stormwater controls); environmental sampling to be conducted (e.g. the parameters, frequency and interpretation of results) and reporting to the ministry. Includes a qualified person certificate. See sections 1-7, 3-8 and 3-9.	Upon notification pursuant to Section 1-3
Annual report	Provides information about the operations based on data from the previous calendar year. See subclause 1-9(e)(iv) for specific content.	Submit yearly on April 1
Environmental Monitoring report	This report is based on the environmental monitoring data from the previous calendar year, including data interpretation, trend analysis and a qualified person certificate. See subclause 1-9(e)(i) and Section 1-7.	Submit on May 31 for the preceding 12-month period ending on April 1
Decommissioning and reclamation plan (as part of the design plan)	Summarizes the work required to decommission the site, including removal of relevant infrastructure, removal of materials, general site clean-up, final contours of the site and returning the site to the intended end use, and any expected post-closure work. Includes the calculation of associated financial assurance if applicable. This report must be reviewed whenever a facility expands. See Section 3-4.	Upon notification pursuant to Section 1-3
Prior to Closure		
Notice of closure	Notifies the ministry of the expected closure date. See subsection 1-11(2).	Submit at least 90 days before the closure of the facility
Closure report	Summarizes the reports and accounts of the facility during the operational phase as well as the work completed to decommission the site, including removal of infrastructure, general site clean-up, final contours of the site and returning the	Submit within 90 days after the closure of the compost facility

	site to the intended end-use, and any post-closure work expected. See subsection 1-11(5) for specific content.	
As Needed		
Financial assurance	For non-municipal or privately owned composting facilities, documents that a financial assurance is in place if required. Financial assurance must be reviewed and updated upon changes to the facility or every five (5) years.	Contact the ministry if a financial assurance is required
Amended environmental monitoring plan	Includes a qualified person certificate. See subclause 1-9(e)(ii) and Section 1-5.	Submit 60 days before implementing changes
Report following the replacement, abandonment or decommissioning of a groundwater monitoring well	Includes a qualified person certificate if the change modifies the environmental monitoring plan. See subclause 1-9(e)(iii) and Section 1-5.	Submit within 60 days of completion of work
Incident reporting	Informs the ministry of an incident involving spills or discharges of substances that may cause or is causing an adverse effect or meets the criteria set out in the Discharge and Discovery Reporting Standard, including unforeseen or unintended fire. See subsection 3-1(2) for specific content.	Immediately report
Notice of expansion	Notifies the ministry of the expected expansion date. See clause 1-9(d).	Submit at least 90 days before the expansion of the facility

Constructing a Compost Facility

What is required before constructing or expanding a compost facility?

Before constructing or expanding a compost facility, every owner must determine a suitable location for the compost facility, ensuring that setbacks listed in Section 3-2 are met. For all composting facilities (apart from facilities accepting less than 100m³ of only leaf and yard waste annually), at least 500 metres is required between a compost facility and:

- A restaurant, canteen, cafeteria, or any other place where food is cooked or prepared for human consumption or is consumed;
- Any motel, hotel, domestic residence or any other permanent or temporary building or residence occupied or may be occupied as a residence; and
- Any school, church or other place of worship, cemetery, heritage site, community centre, recreation facility or similar public building.

The code requires that new and expanding facilities engage and/or consult with adjacent landowners, stakeholders and anyone who may be impacted by the operations of the facility.

All compost facility owners must also provide to the Minister of Environment, upon notification, a site suitability report that presents the location and setbacks and describes the site-specific design required for protecting the environment. A detailed list of requirements is presented in Sections 3-2 and 3-3.

Before constructing or expanding an existing compost facility, every owner of a compost facility must provide a copy of the design plan upon notification. This report describes the design intent, which includes construction specifications, site plans, site maps with appropriate contours and a summary of the components included in the design to achieve the design plan's intent. The design plan also includes details about the feedstock and amendment types and quantities the compost facility will accept and a description of composting methods that will be used to process the feedstock. Once the plan is submitted, the owner can proceed with construction. There is no need to wait for a response from the ministry.

The design plan includes the preparation of a decommissioning and reclamation plan. Windrow dimensions and overall pile height must be managed according to the Operations Plan and Emergency Response Plan. See Section 3-4 for specific requirements of the design plan.

What is an expansion and what should be done when a compost facility expands?

An expansion of a compost facility is when the property boundary of the facility is extended or enlarged or when new or increased active composting areas are beyond the original design plan. Owners of compost facilities need to submit a written notice to the ministry with the expected expansion date. Owners must also submit a site suitability report to the ministry before expanding the facility. Once notification is provided, the owner can proceed with the expansion.

Are liner systems required?

Yes. Owners of compost facilities need to construct a liner system under all active areas of the facility. A natural protective layer can be used where site conditions are protective, such as facilities where clay meets the requirements for a liner system. Specific requirements are detailed in clause 3-4(2) (j).

Are retention ponds required?

While retention ponds are not mandatory to construct, compost facility owners must implement a design to collect, monitor and control or treat process water. Owners may use alternatives such as underground tanks, for instance, in place of a pond or any other equivalent system but would need to be granted approval through the alternative solution. Retention pond requirements are detailed in clause 3-4(2)(p).

Run-on and run-off control systems must also be implemented at compost facilities. See clauses 3-4(2)(k) and (l). Once again, owners can select the systems that are the most convenient for their facilities. These control systems ensure that contact water is contained and stormwater does not interact with the organic feedstock or active compost.

Can food waste be accepted?

Yes. Food waste or kitchen waste can be accepted at a compost facility. Please refer to the Compost Facilities Acceptable Feedstock and Amendment Standard. Facilities accepting food waste require a liner system or an equivalent protective barrier under the areas where the organic material is being composted.

Are there reports that need to be submitted to the ministry once construction is completed?

Once construction is completed as per the design plan, owners must submit a construction verification report to the ministry within 90 days of construction completion. See subsection 3-5.

Operating a Compost Facility

Operation and emergency response plans are essential to prevent operational nuisances like odours, dust and litter, deter vermin and wildlife, and reduce environmental risks.

Subsection 3-6 lists the minimum requirements required in both the Operations Plan and the Emergency Response Plan. Subsection 3-7 lists the operating duties. The plans respond to site-specific conditions at each facility and tailor procedures to achieve the desired outcomes. While a qualified person does not need to prepare the operations and emergency response plans, these documents must be prepared with care by those with the necessary experience to ensure risk mitigation.

Owners must submit the operations and emergency response plans to the ministry via the online portal as soon as they are notified. In addition, an up-to-date copy of both plans must be maintained on-site, reviewed annually and amended as required. Under the chapter, the ministry will shift from routine review of reports at the time of submission to reviewing them during facility inspections or audits.

Samples of plans can be found in the resource section of this guidance document.

Annual Report

Every year, a general annual operations report must be submitted to the ministry by April 1. That report is based on the data from the previous calendar year and describes the following:

- The annual mass or volume and types of feedstocks accepted at the facility;
- The annual mass or volume and types of amendment accepted at the facility;
- The annual mass or volume of compost produced by the facility;
- The annual mass or volume of compost that is used, sold or given away by the facility;
- The annual mass or volume of residuals and overs removed from the site;
- The volume and chemical analysis results of process water removed from the site; and
- A summary of public complaints received at the compost facility and the resolutions.

Record Keeping

Subsection 1-8(1) of the chapter outlines that compost facility owners must maintain general records for a minimum of seven (7) years from their creation date. Subsection 1-8(2) mandates that owners retain certain records for the entire duration of the facility's operation. Table 3 summarizes the requirements for record-keeping at a compost facility.

When the compost facility changes ownership, the records required to be kept pursuant to this chapter are transferred to the new owner.

After the facility closes, all records that were kept, including the closure report, must be kept and retained for seven (7) years.

Table 3 – Summary of required record-keeping based on retention times

Subsection 1-8(1)	Subsection 1-8(2)
Records to be kept for seven (7) years	Records to be kept for the lifetime of the facility
Description and characterization for each of the feedstock and amendment types received and processed	Up-to-date site plan showing all major features of the compost facility
Annual mass or volume and types of feedstock accepted at the facility	Inspection records or compliance audits
Annual mass or volume and types of amendments accepted at the facility	Any discharges or discoveries
Annual mass or volume of compost produced by the facility	Any releases not covered under discharges or discoveries
Annual mass or volume of compost that is used, sold or given away by the facility	Environmental risks
Annual mass or volume of residuals and overs removed from the site	A verified monitoring plan if implemented at the site
Volumes and chemical analysis results of process water removed from site if applicable	Public complaints and resolutions
Environmental monitoring plan, see clause 1-8(1)(f) for specific content	Any regulatory documents for the compost facility
Any certificate received from a qualified person	A copy of any notification, environmental protection plan, application or proposal submitted to the Minister along with related correspondence
Any other records mentioned in Part 2 (i.e. including records mentioned in the accepted EPP)	Construction documents
Closure report	

Closure of a Compost Facility

A compost facility must close when:

- The owner no longer intends to accept feedstock or amendment;
- No materials have been accepted for at least 12 consecutive months; or
- The Minister issued a written request for closure.

Closure Process

- 1. Notification:** Provide written notice to the Ministry of Environment at least 90 days before closure.
- 2. Site security:** Take steps to prevent trespassing, illegal dumping and vandalism. Remove items not needed for the function of the site within 30 days.
- 3. Closure report:** Submit a closure report within 90 days, indicating that the site has been returned to an appropriate end land use and there are no known or suspected adverse effects from the operation of the compost facility. If adverse effects are identified, further site reclamation work may be required as per the impacted sites process. The report must include the requirements listed in 1-11(5) of the chapter.

4. **Financial assurance:** For facilities with a financial assurance, the ministry will return it once decommissioning and the reclamation are verified.
5. **Record-keeping:** After closure, facility owners are required to retain documentation. Please see the record-keeping section for more information.

Resources

[Compost Facility General Guidance](#)

[Guidance for Compost Facilities Accepting Less Than 100 m³ of Only Leaf and Yard Waste Annually](#)

[Guidance for Compost Facilities Following an Alternative Solution](#)

[Compost Facilities Acceptable Feedstock and Amendment Standard](#)

[Environmental online business portal](#)

[Transfer stations](#)

[Solid waste management facilities](#)

[Environmentally impacted sites](#)

Five chapters of the Saskatchewan Environmental Code are used to manage environmentally impacted sites:

- [Discharge and Discovery Reporting Chapter](#)
- [Site Assessment Chapter](#)
- [Corrective Action Plan Chapter](#)
- [Transfer of Responsibility for an Environmentally Impacted Site Chapter](#)
- [Substance Characterization Chapter](#)

[The Compost Council of Canada](#)

[CCME Guidelines for Compost Quality](#)

[Best Practices for Operating an Aerated Windrow Composting Facility](#). This document contains good examples of operation logs for reporting and tracking information as well as recipes and instructions to operate a windrow facility. These resources can help owners to prepare their own operations plan.

This [emergency response plan](#) prepared by SWANA Northern Lights for landfills could be adapted for compost facilities.

[Financial Assurance Requirements - Alternative Solution Guideline - For Industrial Waste Works](#)

Contact

If you require assistance, please call the Ministry of Environment general inquiries line at 1-800-567-4224 (toll-free in North America) or 306-787-2584. You will be connected with an Environmental Protection Officer who can assist you.

Web: saskatchewan.ca/environment

Email: Centre.Inquiry@gov.sk.ca