

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



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Solid Waste and Emergency Response

Measuring Recycling EPA's Voluntary Standard Method



Benefits of Measuring Recycling

Presenting a recycling measurement tool that:

- ▶ Ensures **fair comparisons** of recycling rates among states or municipalities.
- ▶ Produces **useful information** for planning and decision-making.
- ▶ Provides **accurate, up-to-date numbers** for market development.
- ▶ Allows for **easy data collection** from the private sector.
- ▶ Saves you **time and effort**.

“Whether you are a state that is already measuring recycling or you are just starting out, you will be thankful that there’s a resource out there to help you, and you will be able to learn something from it.”

—Kip Eagles, Recycling Survey Coordinator, Washington State Department of Ecology

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed a voluntary, standard methodology for measuring recycling rates. At present, few state and local governments define recycling in the same way, use the same approach for measuring recycling rates, or include the same materials in their rates. Many find it difficult to obtain complete information from data sources to calculate reliable rates. As a result, the benefits of measuring recycling are often not fully realized. Utilizing this methodology can help you accurately evaluate the success of your program and ensure that your fiscal, administrative, and planning decisions are sound.

The Methodology

The standard methodology was developed with input from state and local governments and the private sector. It addresses the key issues encountered by those who undertake recycling measurement. It is flexible and completely voluntary.

The methodology consists of six core (required) elements and a number of recommended (flexible) elements. For example, state and local governments that decide to use the methodology must use a standard recycling rate **equation**, a standard **scope of municipal solid waste (MSW)**, and a standard **definition of recycling**. In addition, EPA recommends that users adopt optional survey forms for obtaining information from various data sources, as well as **worksheets** for compiling data.

“There’s no question that a standard form would help us with our reporting requirements. The majority of the municipalities that we deal with use different formats and have different reporting methods. Standardizing these would definitely make our lives easier.”

—Mike Poland, President of Environmental Recycling, Incorporated (paper processor)

“We see the methodology as essential. We have been pleased with every aspect—it has worked very well for us.”

—**Carl Hursh, Chief of Recycling and Markets, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection**

Guidance

EPA explains the methodology in detail in its guidance document, *Measuring Recycling: A Guide for State and Local Governments*. In addition to detailed information on the core and flexible elements, the document provides “real life” examples, planning checklists, helpful hints and tips, a recommended timeline for developing a measurement program, a glossary of more than 100 standard terms, standard volume-to-weight conversion factors, and other useful tools.

Translator

For states or localities that already measure recycling, EPA also provides an abbreviated form of the methodology, known as “the translator,” for those that want to continue using their existing methods. This approach allows states and localities to recalculate their rates according to the EPA method. A simple worksheet included in the guidance document walks states through these steps.

For More Information

See our Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/recycle.measure>

Order Your Free Copy Today!

Please send me _____ copies of *Measuring Recycling: A Guide for State and Local Governments* (Document Number EPA530-R-97-011).

Name/Title _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

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Or call the EPA RCRA Hotline at 800 424-9346 or TDD 800 553-7672. In the Washington, DC, area, call 703 412-9810 or TDD 703 412-3323.



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What do experts say about
EPA's recycling
measurement method?

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