FACT SHEET – IMPROVING RESOURCE RECOVERY CENTRES

Food and garden organics

Mixed food and garden organics (FOGO) is a valuable organic resource. FOGO may be delivered to a resource recovery centre/transfer station, via a kerbside collection service, and promptly transported to an appropriately licensed composting facility or be delivered directly to a composting facility. Once processed, FOGO produces compost, soil conditioners and mulch products.

Items classifying as FOGO

Items that classify as FOGO in this fact sheet include:
- solid food scraps resulting from meal preparation and uneaten meals, mixed with regular garden waste
- animal bones, leftover meat cuts and tarnished fruit and vegetables that do not meet quality specifications from businesses.

FOGO material that are commercially collected should not be received at resource recovery centres/transfer stations.

Regulatory requirements and standards (OH&S and environmental)

Various acts, regulations and guidelines apply to the storage and transport of FOGO at resource recovery centres/transfer stations. These include:
- Occupational health and safety (OH&S):
  - Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Victorian Government)
  - Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007 (Victorian Government)
  - Guide to Best Practice at Resource Recovery Centres (Sustainability Victoria)
- Environmental:
  - Environment Protection Act 1970 (Victorian Government)
  - Guide to Best Practice for Organics Recovery (Sustainability Victoria)
  - Environmental Guidelines for Composting and Other Organic Recycling Facilities (EPA Victoria)
  - Commercial food waste - EPA position, Publication No. 1606 (EPA Victoria).
- Australian Standards:
  - AS 4454-2012 Composts, soil conditioners and mulches.

Potential hazards and OH&S requirements

If not managed correctly, handling FOGO can pose hazards to workers, the community, public health and the environment. These include:
- odour that may affect amenity
- sharp branches and thorns, and concealed snakes, spiders and insects that may bite or sting
- attraction of wildlife (e.g. birds, rats and other pests) and spread of disease (e.g. fruit fly affected fruit)
- heavy and awkward loads that may cause injury
- contaminants that may enter waterways via leachate and other pollutants.

When handling FOGO, it is important that resource recovery centre/transfer station operators:
- minimise the storage time that FOGO is on-site
- follow the correct safe manual handling and management procedures (refer to WorkSafe Victoria’s Code of Practice for Manual Handling)
- use equipment to aid handling (e.g. front-end loaders)
- wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Acceptance criteria

In most cases, kerbside-collected FOGO should be transported directly to a suitable composting facility. FOGO is usually only stored at resource recovery centres/transfer stations temporarily.

Criteria for accepting FOGO includes the following:
- FOGO should be separate from general waste and other contaminates (e.g. soil, plastics) within loads. Gross contamination may result in the downgrade of whole load and such incidents should be investigated to prevent gross contamination occurring again.
- Only kerbside-collected FOGO should be accepted. Commercially generated FOGO should be transported directly to composting facilities.
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**Storage guidelines**

Resource recovery centres/transfer stations should aim for FOGO storage to meet best practice, in addition to complying with minimum requirements.

Best practice involves storing FOGO in an undercover area and on a sealed surface, with the full volume of FOGO transported to an appropriately EPA-licenced composting facility within 24 to 48 hours of being received. If stored for a longer period of time, FOGO can generate odours, leachate and pollutant gases and bacteria and attract vermin (i.e. birds and rats).

These best practice activities should be undertaken in addition to the minimum requirements, which include the following:

- areas should have sufficient space for incoming/outgoing stockpiles and be located on level hardstand areas
- areas must not be adjacent to ignition sources, flammable materials or other potentially combustible vegetation
- water supply and equipment for dust suppression and fire control measures should be accessible within the vicinity of storage areas
- areas should have installed protection (e.g. barriers or appropriate fences) to prevent wind-blown litter
- storm water run-off should be managed appropriately, and diverted to suitable leachate/storm water management systems
- store only manageable quantities of FOGO, consistent with site’s frequency of transportation to a composting facility (refer to Sustainability Victoria’s Guide to Best Practice for Organics Recovery (2009) for more details on these storage requirements and limits)
- store FOGO in an area marked with suitable signage.

**Record keeping guidelines**

It is important to keep records of FOGO received and sent for composting at resource recovery centres/transfer stations. This is to enable tracking of resource recovery from the site, as well as managing on-site storage quantities, and ensuring that material is not kept on-site for longer than 24-48 hours.

Record keeping requirements related to FOGO include:

- recording at the gatehouse the receipt of FOGO quantities received
- recording the weight or volume of FOGO collected from the site by the approved contractor
- conducting regular inspection of FOGO storage areas, to ensure the site only stockpiles the amount of material able to be stored based on the frequency of transportation to a composting site.

**Transport and re-use/recycling guidelines**

It is not recommended to undertake the same processing of FOGO as is done for garden organics (e.g. for mulching/chipping). This processing of garden organics should only be undertaken where it is not mixed with FOGO and this is due to food materials within loads potentially breaking down and producing odour and leachate and attracting vermin.

If received at a resource recovery centre/transfer station, FOGO must be transported as soon as possible to an EPA-licenced composting facility. Before transportation, FOGO should undergo a level of compaction in order to increase the density of loads and minimise transport costs.

There is no significant difference between best practice and minimum standards in the transport and recycling of FOGO and the following standards should be met at resource recovery centres/transfer stations when transporting off-site:

- transport should occur regularly on a first-in/first-out basis, to prevent stockpiles exceeding the site’s storage limits and to minimise storage timeframes of each load receive
- transport should be undertaken by larger (25 to 40 tonne) transfer trucks and/or trailers with waste licences
- FOGO should only be sent to processing sites that are licenced by EPA to receive, store and/or process FOGO
- appropriate controls (e.g. collection vehicle having appropriate covers) should be in place to minimise odour and scattering of materials during all stages of transport
- contaminant should be removed prior to transporting FOGO off-site, where possible.

**Framework for continuous improvement**

The priority for any decision regarding the acceptance and management of FOGO should be to divert these materials from landfill by transporting material regularly to a suitable facility for processing into compost, soil conditioners and mulch products, while protecting the OH&S of all stakeholders (namely operators and customers) and the environment.

Framework for the continuous improvement of recycling and resource recovery practises for FOGO includes:

- communicate and engage with other local municipalities to investigate consolidated collection/joint procurement activities (e.g. contracting a suitable facility for processing FOGO from multiple sites)
- seek out and build relationships with local collection and recycling contractors, who meet the relevant standards and regulations.

**Further information**

For further information and resources, please contact Sustainability Victoria on 03 8626 8700 or visit www.sustainability.vic.gov.au