

**Recycling Technical Assistance
Project # 519
Buffalo Township, Butler County, PA
Buffalo Township Residential Compliance**

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Problem Statement

In April 2012, Buffalo Township received official notice from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) that, as the Township's population passed the 5,000 threshold and their population density passed the 300 per square mile threshold, the Township was now a mandated municipality, according to PA Act 101. The Township applied for and received Recycling Technical Assistance (RTA) for Pennsylvania Resources Council (PRC) to summarize Act 101 requirements for residential recycling, evaluate current residential recycling in the Township, identify any areas of non-compliance and provide detailed recommendations moving forward.

Findings

Act 101 Requirements for Residential Recycling

The relevant sections of Act 101 in terms of residential recycling can be summarized as follows.

(1) An ordinance or regulation adopted by the governing body of the municipality, requiring all of the following:

(i) Persons to separate at least three materials deemed appropriate by the municipality from other municipal waste generated at their homes, apartments and other residential establishments and to store such materials until collection. The three materials shall be chosen from the following: clear glass, colored glass, aluminum, steel and bimetallic cans, high-grade office paper, newsprint, corrugated paper and plastics.

(2) A scheduled day, at least once per month, during which separated materials are to be placed at the curbside or a similar location for collection.

(3) A system, including trucks and related equipment, that collects recyclable materials from the curbside or similar locations at least once per month from each residence or other person generating municipal waste in the county or municipality. The municipality, other than a county, shall explain how the system will operate, the dates of collection, the responsibilities of persons within the municipality, and incentives and penalties.

(4) Provisions to ensure compliance with the ordinance, including incentives and penalties.

Residential Recycling and DEP Grant Opportunities

DEP includes a positive incentive for municipalities to increase their commercial and residential recycling rates: the 904 Performance Grant (application and required documentation are attached as Appendices 1 and 2; a spreadsheet calculator is attached as Appendix 3).

Current Residential Recycling in the Township

At least some households and businesses in the Township have been recycling for several years, before the Township achieved the status of a mandated municipality. The total reported residential recycling tonnage for Buffalo Township in 2011 was 187.5 tons. If this is divided by an estimated 2011 population of 7,350, an average of **51 pounds** of recyclables is generated per person per year. How does this compare to other mandated communities in the region? Of 59 mandated municipalities in Allegheny County, the average weight of recycling per person per year between 2002 and 2008 was **276 pounds** (median: 191 pounds).

What do these figures mean in terms of potential revenue from DEP Performance Grants? Appendix 3 is a simple spreadsheet calculator for estimating this revenue, given past, current and target or projected recycling tonnages. With 2011 reported figures (187.5 tons of residential and 247.5 tons of commercial), the Township could have received \$3,625 in Performance Grant income if it were in full

compliance with Act 101. If the Township increased residential tonnage to the above average per person figure for mandated municipalities in Allegheny County, and it was in full compliance, it could expect to receive \$20,293 in Performance Grant income.¹

Clearly, increasing residential recycling rates nearly five and half times is no small task: it would take years of sustained effort on the part of the Township, sustained cooperation on the part of the haulers, and sustained and growing participation on the part of residents.

Evaluating Residential Recycling Rates, by Hauler

Unlike the great majority of mandated municipalities, Buffalo Township does not have a municipal-wide contract for residential waste and recyclable hauling. Instead, each household may select to subscribe for these services with any of four haulers with routes in the area:

- **Richard Adamik Trucking.** 142 Cullen Road, Sarver, PA 16055. 724-265-4287 Sandy Adamik.
- **Morrow Refuse, Inc.** 4985 Bakerstown-Culmerville Road, Tarentum, PA 15084. 724-265-2491
- **Vogel Disposal Service, Inc.** 121 Brickyard Road, Mars, PA 16046. 724-625-1511 x 109. Pamela Schaffler, assistant to Doug Vogel
- **Waste Management, Inc.** 1436 West Sunbury Road, West Sunbury, PA 16061. 724-637-3552. (Note: Several attempts were made via phone an email to speak to a company representative. No contact was made.).

This arrangement has advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side the arrangement:

- allows households more freedom (e.g. to ‘fire’ a hauler for poor service);
- may provide greater price competition and lower hauling fees for residents;
- allows continuity and loyalty; and
- may provide greater local employment than a single municipal-wide hauler would.

On the negative side the arrangement;

- makes the tasks of reporting, monitoring, evaluating and promoting residential recycling more difficult for the Township; and
- is far less efficient in terms of petroleum (energy use) and produces more traffic, noise, street wear-and-tear, and polluting emissions than a municipal-wide route by a single hauler would.

The other RTA report (#517: Buffalo Township Composting) revealed a third potential liability of the current arrangement. None of the four haulers offers yard-waste collection to individual households as part of subscriptions, while at least two offer this service at a municipal-wide level (i.e. via contract). Whether any are willing to offer this contract service apart from a residential waste and recycling contract is a question to be answered.

Each of the four haulers reported residential recycling tonnages for 2011 (see Table 1). It would appear then that at least some households in each of the four client pools are aware of their hauler’s recycling services and actually recycle. However, evaluating current residential recycling with an eye to full Act

¹ These calculations include the 60% reduction in Performance Grants that began in 2010, due to budget cuts. If or when these reductions are ended, the above calculations can be increased accordingly.

101 compliance, maximizing recycling rates and maximizing potential DEP Performance Grant funding requires more detailed information.

Table 1: Reported Residential Recycling Tonnage, by Hauler

Hauler	2011 reported tons	% of reported tons	Materials Accepted	# of households serviced	pounds/hh/yr
Waste Management	18.58	10%	Single Stream	n/a	n/a
Morrow	68.92	37%	Commingled	688	200.3
Adamik	20.72	11%	Commingled	340	121.9
Vogel	79.23	42%	OCC, mixed paper, newsp, glass and plastic	730	217.1
TOTAL	187.45	100%		1,758	

Unfortunately, repeated attempts (phones, website, facsimile) to ask Waste Management some basic questions about their residential services (e.g. number of households in the Township with hauling subscriptions) proved fruitless. The total number of occupied households in the Township in 2010 was 2838 (US Census, 2010). The data reported in Table 2 assumes no change over the year until 2011, and that all of the remaining households are serviced by Waste Management.

Table 2: With Estimates for Waste Management

Hauler	2011 reported tons	% of reported tons	Materials Accepted	# of households serviced	pounds/hh/yr	% of hhs serviced
Waste Management	18.58	10%	Single Stream	1,080	38.4	38%
Morrow	68.92	37%	Commingled	688	200.3	24%
Adamik	20.72	11%	Commingled	340	121.9	12%
Vogel	79.23	42%	OCC, mixed paper, newsp, glass, plastic	730	217.1	26%
Total recycled	187.45	100%		2,838		1

The above data, calculations and estimates suggest that there is significant variability in residential recycling rates among the haulers. Vogel reports over 6 times the average pounds per household per year of Waste Management. County Recycling Coordinators and DEP are both well aware that reported tonnages are just that: no weight slips or other third-party confirmation is required. However, if the Township decides to forego drafting an RFP for contract selection, i.e. allow households to continue with individual subscriptions, it should require greater communication from all haulers active in the Township, and pursue this communication.

Suggested Updates to the Township’s Recycling Ordinance (#85)

- Change ‘residential establishments’ to ‘households’, for greater clarity.
- Include paper and corrugated among list of materials required to be recycled, if acceptable to hauler.
- Include section for haulers, that they are required to:
 - Charge for recycling services to all waste-subscribing households;
 - Regularly inform all waste-subscribing households of these services, what materials are accepted, in what bags or containers; and collection calendar/schedule.

- Report annual tonnages, and number of households serviced, directly to Township (can be copied as an email to County Recycling Coordinator, as long as the form includes the number of households serviced).

Recommendations are listed in chronological order

1) Consider the option of moving towards a municipal-wide contract. The Township should carefully weigh the pros and cons of the current household subscription system vs. a municipal-wide contract. One option might be to delay any RFP for contracts for a year or two, to evaluate the cooperation of current haulers in the shared efforts to promote and increase residential recycling.

2) Update the Ordinance to include the following specific requirements of all waste haulers active in the Township

a) Submit a copy of the annual tonnage report directly to the Township, as well as to the County Recycling Coordinator. Appendix 4 is a simple reporting form that is acceptable to the County Recycling Coordinator.

b) Include in this annual reporting form a space to enter the number of households that the hauler services, and include a requirement to enter and update this figure in the hauler requirements section of the Ordinance (refer to Appendix 4).

c) Each year, as early as possible, send the Township a copy of each year's recycling calendar, list of acceptable materials, any container requirements and any other literature sent to subscribing households.

3) Update the Ordinance to include the following specific requirements of all Township residents

a) All households are required to recycle at least three from the list of recyclable materials (increasing the required number can only increase your recycling tonnages).

b) All households are required to learn the following from their hauler: what materials are acceptable; what are the requirements for containers or bags; and their collection schedule

c) Penalties/enforcement for non-compliance with recycling ordinance

d) List of acceptable materials per the Township, definitions, etc.

4) Update Web-site to Inform (and remind) both Haulers and Residents

Although all four haulers apparently already collect residential curbside recyclables and at least some households already put recyclables out on the curb for collection, the Township should use their new mandated status as an opportunity to stimulate significantly greater recycling participation. Appendix 5 provides links to several municipal web pages that are effective at communicating the benefits of recycling; the requirements to recycle; how to recycle in the municipality; and what is required of commercial haulers.

5) Produce Mailings to Inform (and remind) both Haulers and Residents

Ideally, the new website should be launched just prior to two mailings: one to all Township households (always best as part of another, expected mailing, e.g. a water or sewer bill) and the other to the four haulers active in the Township. Appendix 6 and Appendix 7 are two examples of especially effective mailings to residents.