

# Zero Waste in Action

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## Universal Recycling: Delaware, USA

### Summary

Delaware provided curbside recycling collection to all single-family and multi-family residences while repealing its beverage deposit law. Businesses are required to recycle. The state has a goal to recover 60% of municipal waste by 2020.

### Population

936,000

### Year enacted

2010

### Who's affected

Households, Apartments

### Overview

Delaware's Universal Recycling Law expanded curbside recycling collection to all single-family and multi-family residences and repealed its refundable five-cent beverage deposit law. Residents are not required to participate in the recycling program but they have the service and pay for it regardless. The bill also required businesses to participate in a recycling program beginning January 1, 2014.

The five-cent, refundable deposit on beverage containers was replaced with a four-cent, nonrefundable fee on beverage containers set to end in 2014 or when it reached \$22 million (it did expire on December 31, 2014). Retailers were required to charge the fee and submit the payment to the state. The law only applied to carbonated beverages sold in glass or plastic bottles (not on aluminum cans).

The money went to the Delaware Recycling Fund to be used for low-interest loans and grants for haulers to help offset start-up costs for offering services, a study on how to implement the commercial recycling program, and administration of the program.

The regulation called for a study and recommendations on business recycling, with the goal of all businesses participating in a recycling program by 2014. Commercial waste makes up half the waste in Delaware.



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## Background

The state legislature passed a bill to repeal the bottle bill in 2009. However, the governor vetoed this bill and then created a plan to replace bottle deposits with universal recycling in 2010. Delaware was the first state to repeal its bottle bill and created much controversy with critics citing the high recycling rates achieved by other states' bottle bills and advocating for improvements to, not a repeal of, Delaware's existing legislation. The bottle bill had been in place since 1982.

The state had previously provided curbside recycling and yard waste collection and stopped services in 2011 when the law took effect. Prior to the law, only 25% of Delaware's households had curbside recycling service. The state recycling agency continued to run collection programs for household hazardous waste and electronic equipment. The state also has a landfill ban on yard waste and a network of drop-off centers for residents to compost their yard debris.

## Implementation

Haulers had to provide single-stream recycling service to single-family households and most bars and restaurants by late 2011, and had to include the costs of recycling service and trash service as a single charge for single-family customers. (Single-stream recycling typically collects aluminum cans, plastic containers, glass bottles and mixed papers.) Multi-family dwelling customers received recycling service by 2013.

## Education

Multi-family property owners must educate residents at least once a year on how to participate in the recycling program, including what can be recycled, how to prepare it, and where to put the recyclables.

## Enforcement

Trash and recycling haulers are now required to report annually to the state on the type and weight of recyclables collected from residents, multi-family complexes and businesses; if the materials are collected in single or multiple streams; and where the materials were dropped off for recycling.

## Future Plans

The law set recovery goals for municipal solid waste of 50% by 2015 and 60% by 2020. The recovery goals for all solid waste (including construction debris and industrial waste) are 72% by 2015 and 85% by 2020.



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The state can explore other regulations such as pay-as-you-throw, extended producer responsibility or disposal bans if these goals are not met. The law recognizes the principles of Zero Waste, defined as “designing and managing products and processes to systematically avoid and eliminate the volume and

## Downloads

[Guide to Recycling in Delaware](#)

[Multi-family Recycling Plan and Worksheet for Delaware](#)

[Delaware letter to businesses, non-profits, and institutions requiring recycling](#)

## More information

[Delaware Recycles](#)

[WGMD Radio: “Delaware says goodbye bottle bill and hello universal recycling law”](#)

[Delaware Replaces Bottle Deposits with Controversial Recycling Fee](#)

[Delaware Liberal: “Markell to Veto Bottle Bill”](#)



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