

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA**  
**Department of Environmental Quality**

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**Subject:** Land Protection and Revitalization Guidance Memo No. LPR-SW-2018-01  
**Frequently Asked Questions about Convenience Centers**

**To:** Regional Land Protection Managers

**From:** Leslie Beckwith, Director, Office of Financial Responsibility & Waste Programs *LSB*

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**Copies:** Regional Solid Waste Inspectors, Regional Solid Waste Permit Writers, Priscilla Rohrer, and Kathryn Perszyk

**Summary:**

The Virginia DEQ commonly receives questions about the types of solid waste management activities that are allowable at convenience centers, which are exempt from permitting requirements under the Virginia Solid Waste Management Regulations. This guidance provides the public and regulated community with general information about these types of sites, including the difference between convenience centers and transfer stations; types of waste that may be managed; appropriate waste containers and timeframes for storage; and who to contact with questions or complaints regarding a particular site. This guidance also replaces Guidance Memo No. LPR-SW-05-1995, "Definition of Appropriate Container."

**Electronic Copy:**

An electronic copy of this guidance is available on the [Virginia Regulatory Town Hall website](#).

**Contact Information:**

Please contact the solid waste compliance coordinator, Priscilla Rohrer, at (540) 574-7852 or [priscilla.rohrer@deg.virginia.gov](mailto:priscilla.rohrer@deg.virginia.gov) with any questions regarding the application of this guidance.

**Disclaimer:**

*This document is provided as guidance and, as such, sets forth standard operating procedures for the agency. However, it does not mandate any particular method nor does it prohibit any alternative method for the analysis of data, unless specifically required by the VSWMR. If alternative proposals are made, such proposals should be reviewed and accepted or denied based on their technical adequacy and compliance with appropriate laws and regulations.*



## Frequently Asked Questions about Convenience Centers

### What is a convenience center?

The Virginia Solid Waste Management Regulations (VSWMR), [9 VAC 20-81-10](#), define a "convenience center" as a collection point for the temporary storage of solid waste provided for individual solid waste generators who choose to transport solid waste generated on their own premises to an established centralized point, rather than directly to a disposal facility. To be classified as a convenience center, the collection point may not receive waste from collection vehicles that have collected waste from more than one real property owner. A convenience center shall be on a system of regularly scheduled collections.

Generally, a convenience center is a strategically located drop-off site for the collection of solid waste from local residents. Convenience centers are typically owned and operated by local governments for the benefit of their citizens. Property owners may choose to self-transport solid wastes generated on their own property to a convenience center rather than directly to a landfill or transfer station, especially when curbside pickup is not available. Convenience centers usually consist of dumpsters, compactors, or roll-off containers and may be manned or unmanned and fenced or unfenced. Waste is collected in the containers and usually removed from the site on a weekly or more frequent basis. Convenience centers may also offer options for separate collection or recycling of certain materials including, but not limited to, paper, cardboard, plastics, aluminum or tin cans, glass, waste tires, used oil and white goods.

### Do convenience centers require a solid waste permit from DEQ?

No. Convenience centers do not require a solid waste permit provided they operate as defined by the VSWMR (see above), solid waste is managed in appropriate containers, and no open dump, hazard, or public nuisance is created.

### Do convenience centers require a VPDES permit from DEQ?

No. Convenience centers do not require a Virginia Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (VPDES) permit from DEQ, provided there are no discharges of pollutants to surface water. However, please note that public and private dumpsters or other waste containers are commonly located on properties where certain industrial activities, construction activities, or operation of a municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) requires a general or individual VPDES permit for discharges of stormwater. Sites subject to these types of permits are required to implement appropriate pollution prevention control measures (such as securing the container with a tarp or lid) to minimize the discharge of pollutants from stormwater in areas where waste is stored.

### What is the difference between a convenience center and a transfer station?

Convenience centers are a collection point for the temporary storage of solid waste from individual property owners, whereas transfer stations can receive solid waste from collection vehicles that have collected waste from multiple properties. The VSWMR defines a "transfer station" as any solid waste storage or collection facility at which solid waste is transferred from collection vehicles to haulage

vehicles for transportation to a central solid waste management facility for disposal, incineration, or resource recovery. In other words, waste is collected from convenience centers and then hauled to either a transfer station, materials recovery facility OR directly to a landfill, incinerator, or waste-to-energy plant.

Convenience centers do not require a permit to operate. Transfer stations typically operate under a Permit-By-Rule (PBR) unless the complexity or other factors require a full solid waste permit. Transfer stations must be in compliance with siting, design, construction, operation, recordkeeping, closure, and financial responsibility requirements, in accordance with the VSWMR. More information can be found on the [Solid Waste Transfer Station Permit webpage](#) located on the DEQ public website.

### **Who should I contact if I have questions or concerns about a particular site?**

Activities at convenience centers are exempt from regulation under the VSWMR. Therefore, DEQ does not routinely inspect convenience centers or provide regulatory oversight for operations at those sites. The primary responsibility to manage and oversee activities at convenience centers lies within the purview of the locality or entity that owns and operates the site. Although the exact roles and responsibilities vary from locality to locality, the local public works or solid waste department is usually in charge of managing those sites, and in some cases, the Town or City Manager or County Administrator may address your issues directly. If you have any questions or complaints about a specific convenience center, please direct those concerns first to the appropriate contact at your locality.

### **What types of waste are accepted at convenience centers?**

Convenience centers generally accept household waste, including bagged, boxed, or loose garbage, trash, and refuse derived from individual properties. However, the owner/operator of a convenience center (most commonly a municipality) may post more restrictive rules to prohibit specific wastes, especially when there are alternative management strategies for that material. Check with the convenience center if you have questions about a specific waste.

The following items are generally **NOT** accepted at convenience centers:

- Commercial, industrial and institutional waste
- Burning/smoldering waste
- Lead acid batteries
- Asbestos-containing materials<sup>1</sup>
- Radioactive waste
- Hazardous waste<sup>2</sup>
- Regulated medical waste<sup>3</sup>
- Animal carcasses (particularly livestock)
- Bulk liquid wastes
- Sewage

<sup>1</sup> Unless the locality prohibits it, household asbestos wastes (typically non-friable roofing shingles, siding or tile from residential properties, which are NOT contractor removed or generated) are generally accepted at convenience centers if materials are properly containerized to prevent airborne dust.

<sup>2</sup> Some localities may routinely provide collection for wastes such as used oil, antifreeze, batteries, pesticides or herbicides, paints and solvents that are generated through normal household activities and

require more careful handling and disposal. Other localities may periodically hold special events called Household Hazardous Waste Days to collect these types of materials.

<sup>3</sup> Instructions for disposing of household sharps (needles) can be found on the [Management of Household Sharps Public Flyer](#) on the DEQ public website.

### **What is an “appropriate” container for management of solid waste?**

The VSWMR, [9 VAC 20-81-95.D.10](#), states that management of solid waste in appropriate containers at the site of its generation is exempt from the VSWMR, with provisions, provided no open dump, hazard, or public nuisance is created. Solid waste should be managed in appropriate containers regardless of whether the containers are located at the site of generation or at a convenience center. The VSWMR does not indicate what constitutes an appropriate container under this section of the regulation. For the purposes of VSWMR [9 VAC 20-81-95.D.10](#), the following criteria can be used to demonstrate that a container is appropriate for the storage or compaction of solid waste.

For reusable containers or compactors, the unit should be:

- of adequate size to physically contain all the waste that is placed into it in a manner that is not a fire, health, or safety hazard, or provides food or harborage for vectors,
- constructed of corrosion resistant metal, durable/rigid plastic, or other material, which will not absorb water, grease, or oil and is compatible with the type of waste to be stored,
- leak-proof, including sides, seams, and bottoms, and durable enough to withstand anticipated usage without rusting, cracking, or deforming in a manner that would make it a fire, health or safety hazard or provide food or harborage for vectors, (in the case of containers used for compaction, the container must be capable of withstanding the full force of the ram), and
- designed or equipped to prevent spillage and so that it cannot be tipped over easily.

For single-use plastic and paper bags, the bags must meet the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) Standard No. 31 for polyethylene refuse bags and Standard No. 32 for paper refuse bags, respectively. However, such bags do not need to have been certified by the NSF. Between collection periods, single-use bags containing putrescible wastes should be stored in a manner that protects its contents from scavenging animals (i.e. dogs, raccoons, cats, rats, etc.) and vectors. This can be accomplished by storing the plastic bags either within the confines of a building or within an appropriate reusable container as described above.

The area around a container should be maintained to control litter, and spills should be contained and cleaned up as soon as possible. Sites that are subject to a VPDES permit for discharges of stormwater are required to implement appropriate pollution prevention control measures to minimize the discharge of pollutants from stormwater in areas where waste is stored. Some examples of control measures (which are best management practices for any site to use) include:

- storing containers under cover or equipping containers with lids or tarps to prevent precipitation from coming into contact with the waste in order to minimize the discharge of pollutants in stormwater runoff,
- ensuring that lids or tarps are secured or tightly fitting to protect the contents from dispersal by rain, wind, or other elements, and to minimize odors and vectors,
- inspecting containers on a regular basis for rust, holes or other damage that could cause leaking,
- locating containers in areas with berms or curbs to more easily contain and cleanup any spilled or leaking liquids or trash, and

- avoiding the use of water to clean up spills – instead use sweeping to collect trash and absorbent materials or a wet vac to clean up and properly dispose of spilled liquids.

If you have concerns or complaints about a particular convenience center, please direct those issues first to the entity (usually a locality) that owns or operates the site.

### **How often should waste be removed from a convenience center?**

A convenience center shall be on a system of regularly scheduled collections. Putrescible waste (solid waste that contains organic material capable of being decomposed by micro-organisms and cause odors) should not be stored more than seven days between the time of collection and time of removal for disposal. Nonputrescible wastes should not be stored more than 90 days between time of collection and time of removal for proper management.

Items collected for recycling (such as white goods – stoves, washers, hot water heaters, and other large appliances) should not be speculatively accumulated. In other words, at least 75% of the materials accumulated should be removed from the site annually.

### **Can a convenience center accept waste from small waste haulers?**

No. A "Convenience center" means a collection point for the temporary storage of solid waste provided for individual solid waste generators who choose to transport solid waste generated on their own premises to an established centralized point, rather than directly to a disposal facility. To be classified as a convenience center, the collection point may not receive waste from collection vehicles that have collected waste from more than one real property owner. Based on the definition, a site/facility accepting solid waste from any waste haulers – small or large – would not fit the convenience center definition and would be considered a transfer station requiring a PBR.

### **Can a convenience center accept waste from small businesses?**

A convenience center may accept solid waste from individual property owners. That might include waste from a small business as long as the business owner is transporting only solid waste generated on their own property (not from multiple properties) directly to the convenience center and the locality does not prohibit acceptance of the waste. Hazardous waste and universal waste (a subset of hazardous waste that includes batteries, pesticides, certain light bulbs, and mercury-containing equipment) generated by a small business are not exempt as household hazardous waste; therefore, these wastes must be managed separately in accordance with the Virginia Hazardous Waste Management Regulations, [9 VAC 20-60](#), and cannot be disposed of at convenience centers.

### **Can a contractor working on a residence bring generated waste to a convenience center?**

Acceptance of specific wastes may vary from locality to locality. Generally, a contractor working on a residence may bring certain wastes (such as a kitchen sink replacement) to a convenience center, as long as the contractor is delivering solid waste from one real property owner at a time and the waste is properly contained. Large or bulky construction demolition debris from a renovation, demolition, or other construction project (e.g. an addition to a home) may not be acceptable for disposal at a convenience center. Please check with the convenience center to verify proper disposal of specific materials.

### **Can a contractor temporarily store wastes at job sites and other properties?**

Yes. Contractors may temporarily store solid wastes generated from single jobs/properties at the job site or another property before shipping the wastes offsite for proper disposal or further management. Contractors should maintain records of the name of the waste generator, amount and types of waste stored, dates and location of storage, and the date and location of the final destination for disposal. In order to be exempt from permit requirements, offsite properties where waste is stored should be operated in accordance with the definition of a convenience center, and solid waste should be managed in appropriate containers in accordance with the following storage timeframes:

- putrescible waste should not be stored for more than 7 days, and
- nonputrescible wastes should not be stored for more than 90 days.

Emergency clean-up contractors may temporarily store nonhazardous petroleum contaminated soil and absorbents or other solid wastes at the clean-up site or another property for up to 90 days without a solid waste permit, provided the wastes are appropriately contained and storage conditions prevent leaks, spills, and discharges to surface water. All waste should be properly characterized and any additional records of sampling and analysis maintained. Final disposal of petroleum contaminated soil should be done in accordance with the requirements of [9 VAC 20-81-660](#). Facilities engaged in bioremediation or other treatment of contaminated soils should contact the Land Protection Manager in their [regional DEQ office](#) as the treatment activities may require a solid waste permit.

### **Can a convenience center open burn any wastes?**

No. Convenience centers may not open burn any wastes, including vegetative wastes. However, convenience centers may be co-located with a landfill, and some active landfills and closed landfills conducting post-closure care may conduct infrequent open burning of vegetative wastes provided there is no burning on areas where waste has previously been disposed of or is actively being disposed.

### **What hours can a convenience center operate?**

DEQ does not have regulations that dictate what hours a convenience center may operate. Hours may vary from site to site and may be subject to local ordinances.

### **Are there any siting restrictions for a convenience center?**

No. The VSWMR does not contain any siting requirements or restrictions for locating a convenience center. However, the DEQ recommends that localities consider establishing appropriate setbacks from surface waters (e.g. streams, creeks, ponds, lakes, and rivers), wetlands, and private property (especially off-site residences) and that convenience centers be located outside of the 100-year flood plain, if possible.