



Land Application Requirements

Land application of compostable material or digestate can enhance soil health and assist the state in diverting organics from landfill disposal. However, specific requirements must be met to ensure land application does not become illegal disposal and result in enforcement action.

Applicable definitions:

- "Land application" is the final deposition of compostable material and/or digestate spread on a parcel of land, including land zoned only for agricultural uses.
- "Compostable material" means any organic material that, when accumulated, will become active compost.
- "Digestate" means the solid and/or liquid residual material remaining after organic material has been processed in an in-vessel digester.

Material testing and Application Limits

Compostable material and/or digestate intended to be land applied on a parcel of land greater than five (5) acres must be sampled and tested to verify it meets the limits for physical contamination (Table 1), metal concentrations (Table 2), and pathogen density (Table 3). The storage, depth, and frequency limits will depend on the land use zone designation (Table 4).

Material Sampling

A person who receives compostable material from a compostable material handling facility

or operation will also receive sampling results from the operator that verifies the material meets the limits for physical contamination, metal concentrations, and pathogen density. Sampling results retained as verification must be provided to the enforcement agency (EA) upon request.

Land Application Activity – Enforcement Agency Notification

A land owner who intends to receive greater than 4,040 cubic yards of compostable material or digestate during a 12-month period shall comply with additional operating and record keeping standards as well as the [EA notification requirements](#) commencing with Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (14 CCR), section 18100. Additional information and resources can be found on CalRecycle's [Land application activity homepage](#).

Uses Not Subject to Land Application Requirements

The full list of uses that are not subject to the land application requirements are found in [14 CCR, section 17852\(a\)\(24.5\)\(B\)](#). These include:

- The use of compost, including [amendments](#) and [additives](#), produced in compliance with the compostable material handling regulations
- The use of compostable material for gardening or landscaping on a parcel of land less than five (5) acres receiving less than 4,040 cubic yards in a 12-month period

Table 1. Physical Contamination

Type	Percentage Limit on dry weight basis
Physical Contaminants greater than 4 millimeters (human-made inerts such as glass, metal, plastic, etc.)	≤ 0.5%
Plastic film greater than 4 millimeters	≤ 0.1%

Table 2. Maximum Metal Concentrations

Constituent	Maximum Concentration on dry weight basis (mg/kg)
Arsenic (As)	41
Cadmium (Cd)	39
Chromium (Cr)	See note below
Copper (Cu)	1,500
Lead (Pb)	300
Mercury (Hg)	17
Nickel (Ni)	420
Selenium (Se)	100

Note: Although there is no maximum acceptable metal concentration for chromium, operators shall arrange for concentrations of chromium to be determined in connection with the analysis of other metals.

Table 3. Pathogen Density

Pathogen	Density Limit- Most Probable Number per gram(s) of total solids on a dry weight basis (MPN/GTS)
Fecal coliform	< 1,000 MPN/GTS
Salmonella sp.	< 3 MPN/4GTS

If there is any inadvertent inconsistency found between this document and the regulations, deference must be given to the regulations

Table 4. Storage, Frequency, Depth, and Soil Incorporation by Zoning

Zoning	Storage (more than 200 cubic yards)	Frequency*	Accumulated Depth*	Incorporated Into Soil
Not agricultural use	≤ 7 days	≤ 1 per 12-month period	≤ 6 inches on surface	< 30 days
Agricultural use only	≤ 12 months*	≤ 3 per 12-month period	≤ 6 inches on surface	< 30 days

*Alternatives may be approved by the EA if the EA determines it does not pose a risk to public health and safety and the environment.

