



NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (NCTCOG)

Resource Paper: Hauler Licensing

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Introduction

As the demand for organics recycling of food scraps and yard waste grows, there is potential for the number of trucks and haulers operating on local roads to increase as well. A hauler licensing program enables municipalities to understand and monitor waste management operations without requiring formal contracts or participation by residents. It ensures equitable service provision, identifies all haulers operating within the community across organics, recycling, and solid waste collection streams, and collects valuable data on collection trends without imposing new requirements on residents. Furthermore, a hauler licensing program can lay the groundwork for building partnerships with organics recyclers and expand services to residents. This resource paper outlines key considerations and best practices for developing a hauler licensing ordinance and program.

Background

A hauler licensing ordinance establishes a framework for regulating and monitoring solid waste collection services within a municipality. Waste haulers, or those subject to a hauler licensing ordinance and program, are generally defined as entities that collect or transport waste for a fee on a regular or periodic basis. This includes haulers providing trash, recycling, and/or organics (including yard trimmings and food scraps) collection services to single-family residences, multifamily properties, and commercial businesses. Liquid waste, including grease-trap, grit-trap, and septic-tank waste, is generally regulated through its own hauler licensing ordinance and program. Due to this toolkit's focus on organic materials and residential collection services, liquid waste is addressed but not explored as extensively as municipal solid waste in this resource paper.



Ordinance requirements vary based on local priorities but should consider the regional capacity of solid waste haulers and facilities and ensure the inclusion of all haulers that meet baseline requirements. Certain provisions should always be included, such as insurance and service quality standards, data collection and reporting, and equitable access to services, to create a level playing field and ensure haulers are compliant with safety regulations. Other elements, such as requiring to offer recycling services or volume-based pricing, can be included following additional engagement and understanding of local operations. Information gathered through hauler licensing can help municipalities understand current waste collection systems and behaviors, identify areas where waste diversion can be improved, improve customer service and service delivery, and establish achievable data-driven goals, programs, and local legislation to support broader sustainability initiatives.

Key benefits and challenges to hauler licensing are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Benefits and Challenges to Hauler Licensing

BENEFITS	CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Creates a level playing field for all haulers to abide by the same rules. ✓ Promotes transparency in hauler practices, creating trust and accountability in their collection and processing. ✓ Enables the municipality to hold haulers accountable for illicit discharges and other damages to municipal infrastructure. ✓ Protects residents by ensuring all haulers are properly insured. ✓ Can be leveraged to increase diversion and ensure equitable services are offered communitywide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Requires staff time for administration and enforcement. ✗ Requires hauler time to apply for, obtain, and pay for a license or registration. ✗ Depending on licensing requirements, it can increase the costs of doing business for haulers, some of which may be passed on to consumers. ✗ Not as effective in increasing organics recycling participation as contracted services.



Best Practices

The following best practices provide guidance on activities a community should undertake before, during, and after ordinance development to ensure its successful implementation.

ONGOING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Identify and involve key stakeholders, including haulers, residents, businesses, elected officials, and other impacted groups, throughout the development, implementation, and program management process. Early and continuous involvement helps build buy-in and ensure concerns, needs, and potential impacts are understood. Input received can be used to tailor the ordinance to what is feasible for the community.

Solid waste haulers should be engaged before ordinance development to explain the municipality's goals, as well as understand what services haulers currently provide, the data they track, and how licensing components may impact them. Individual interviews or small group discussions can encourage more candid responses than large public forums. After implementation, maintain open communication channels so haulers can provide feedback and raise potential concerns.

When speaking to residents and businesses, surveys can provide valuable insight into service expectations, current waste practices, and community priorities regarding solid waste, recycling, and organics collection. Important considerations, including space constraints to accommodate recycling and/or organics collection containers, can be understood and addressed through this outreach. Additionally, public forums can allow all community members to voice their thoughts on components of the ordinance and ensure transparency in the development process.

Elected officials' support is critical to passing a hauler licensing ordinance. Consider hosting study sessions and ongoing discussions to recognize and address their concerns, such as potential impacts on service costs and administrative overhead needs. Clearly communicate the key benefits of hauler licensing, including equitable residential services, improved hauler safety, and support for sustainability practices. Concerns over excluding haulers can be addressed by emphasizing that hauler licensing sets baseline requirements to ensure a level playing field and by maintaining ongoing engagement with them throughout the process.



DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING

Licensing should require consistent and verifiable data reporting. It is standard practice that haulers submit an application annually and report data to the municipality annually or biannually.

At a minimum, applications and reports should include:

- **Applicant name, contact information, and principal business address**, so the municipality can develop a line of communication with the hauler.
- **Services provided**, such as trash, recycling, and/or organics services and for single-family residential, multifamily residential, and/or commercial sectors.
- **Vehicle inventory**, including make, color, year, State of Texas Vehicle Inspection Certification, collection capacity, license plate, and weight. This ensures all trucks meet state regulations, verifies that vehicles meet waste collection standards that prevent spillages or other nuisances, and limits non-licensed trucks from operating in the municipality.
- **Certificate of liability insurance**, including commercial general liability and auto liability, to ensure financial security in the case of accidents.
- **Total service accounts**, including the number of single-family residential, multifamily residential, and commercial customers served. This should be further broken down by accounts subscribed to trash, recycling, and organics (yard trimmings and/or food scraps) collection services, as applicable.
- **Tons of solid waste, recycling, and/or organics collected by customer category** (single-family, multifamily, and/or commercial), to help the community understand current waste practices by sector and guide the development of strategies that align with broader goals.
- **Name of destination facilities and weight tipping fees and receipts** to confirm solid waste, recycling, organics, and/or liquid waste (including oil and grease waste) are taken to the appropriate facilities and processed as intended.
- **Fees**, to cover administrative costs in managing the ordinance.

Additional data to consider, depending on the regional capacity of haulers, include:

- **Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) registration**, as required by [30 TAC Chapter 324](#), if transporting liquid waste and hazardous waste, to ensure compliance with state legislation. TCEQ does not regulate the transportation of municipal solid waste, recyclables, and organics, except in the case of biosolids of sewage sludge.
- **Education and outreach activities**, such as flyers, brochures, events, and other resources and efforts made by the hauler to educate customers on proper sorting. Ongoing education and outreach efforts will help residents improve their recycling habits and the municipality meet greater diversion targets.
- **Rate schedules**, including those offered to individual customers and groups, show a pricing scheme.
- **Logs of customer complaints and resolutions**, including number, type, and response times, missed collections and responses, vehicle accidents, and traffic violations involving hauler vehicles.

Keep in mind that haulers operate as private businesses in a competitive market and may be reluctant to share information that could affect their competitiveness, such as customer addresses or contact details. The municipality should refrain from requesting proprietary information, particularly that which may be publicly requested through the Texas Public Information Act.



RECYCLING AND ORGANICS RECYCLING

A hauler licensing ordinance may establish requirements for municipal solid waste haulers to offer or provide recycling and organics recycling services to their customers. It is recommended that haulers be required to offer recycling collection services if existing capacity exists. This inclusion in the waste hauler licensing ordinance ensures that all residents have uniform and equitable access to recycling and helps maximize the diversion of recyclable materials from the waste stream. A materials recovery list, or record of items mandated to be accepted as part of recycling collection, should be included and aligned with the capacity of local material recovery facilities (MRFs). This reduces confusion about what is recyclable and supports creating uniform educational materials by the municipality that apply to all constituents.

Curbside organics collection and the composting of yard waste and food scraps are gaining broader adoption statewide and nationally but may not be at the capacity levels needed to support universal access. This service may be included as a requirement to be offered to residential and commercial customers if infrastructure and hauler capacity exist. Similarly to recycling, a minimum list of compostable materials should be included that meets the ability of local composters or facilities that will process them.

No matter if recycling and organics recycling are mandated to be offered to residents or commercial businesses, hauler licensing should still require data collection and reporting of these materials if the service is provided by the hauler. Additionally, if either recycling or organics collection is provided, the ordinance should specify that all recyclable materials be delivered to a permitted materials recovery facility (MRF) for recycling and all food scraps and yard trimmings be delivered to a permitted compost facility.

SUB-CONTRACTING

If offering recycling or composting services is made mandatory through the ordinance, it is important to allow for subcontracting. This component ensures that smaller haulers can operate in the municipality. Residents should be allowed to contract different haulers for different waste stream collection services if they so choose.

LICENSE FEES

Fees can be set to help cover administrative costs in managing the ordinance, such as staff time, data management tools, and annual report review. It is recommended to include a nominal fee to cover partial costs of reviewing applications, issuing licenses, and maintaining updated information on the program webpage.

These fees generally take the form of a single annual application fee or a per-vehicle fee, collected with the hauler license application. Higher fees could create financial barriers for smaller haulers and should be carefully considered when determining the structure. Additionally, it is advised against setting the fee amount in the ordinance, as this can restrict future adjustments.

VOLUME-BASED PRICING

Volume-based pricing, also known as Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT), charges single-family residents for solid waste collection based on the volume of waste they generate. This system promotes fairness by allowing residents to select their service level, therefore enabling households that produce less landfill waste to pay lower fees than those that create more. Additionally, volume-based pricing has been shown to increase the amount of material recycled and decrease the amount of material sent to landfill. [EPA reports from 2010](#) show PAYT has helped municipalities double or triple their recycling rates, and a [2018 report by the University of New Hampshire](#) found waste disposal rates drop between 42% to 54% in municipalities with PAYT programs in place.

PAYT programs can lead to certain challenges, including increased contamination when recycling containers are used for trash. To discourage residents from selecting the smallest and least expensive cart and then misusing their recycling bin as a second trash container, haulers can conduct 'lid flips' and attach tags to recycling bins to notify residents when non-recyclable materials are found. If improper disposal continues, haulers may refuse collection or impose a financial penalty.

Standard residential container sizes typically include 32-, 64-, and 96-gallon carts. As with other ordinance provisions, volume-based pricing should only be implemented once it is confirmed that haulers have the operational capacity to support it, to ensure no haulers are excluded. Licensed haulers should then be required to report their rates to verify compliance.

Since dumpster bin sizes and collection frequency are both variable for multifamily and commercial customers, volume-based pricing is generally already embedded into haulers' operations.

COLLECTION CARTS

All material should be collected from wheeled carts with lids to residents and metal dumpster bins to commercial businesses and multifamily complexes to provide efficiency in collection and to reduce littering. Carts may be provided directly by the resident or be required by the hauler. Haulers may be mandated to have the company's logo and an infographic of accepted materials on collection containers to help identify that only licensed haulers are providing services to community members and to educate participants.

HOURS OF OPERATION

A hauler licensing program may also establish required operational hours for collection vehicles within the municipality. These hours should align with existing noise ordinances, particularly in residential neighborhoods. Standard practice typically restricts operations to between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.

DEDICATED STAFF AND SUPPORT

Designate a knowledgeable staff member to manage the hauler licensing program, including overseeing applications, verifying insurance and service requirements, managing data, and providing support to both haulers and the community. This individual should be well-versed in the municipality's current waste management policies and practices and housed in a department that oversees greater solid waste programs. Make their contact information readily available to stakeholders to facilitate easy communication.

The individual should also be responsible for internal staff training, such as for individuals in Public Works, Finance, Code Enforcement, and Sustainability departments. A meeting to review requirements and processes will help ensure the smooth administration of applications, financial processes, and compliance monitoring, as well as help ensure staff are familiar with the municipal ordinance requirements to be able to answer questions when engaging with residents throughout the community during the course of their normal work.

TRANSPARENCY

Ordinance provisions and requirements should be clear, straightforward, and consistent so that all stakeholders can easily understand and comply with them. Establish a dedicated webpage to provide this information, including the application process and a directory of licensed haulers so residents can easily contact them.

If the ordinance requires haulers to report tonnage data, clearly

specify that this information may be used to track baseline waste metrics, monitor progress toward diversion and sustainability goals, and be made publicly available. Transparent reporting promotes accountability and builds community trust, particularly by showing that recyclables and organics are not being sent to landfills.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

Create resources to help haulers easily comply with the ordinance. Beyond maintaining a dedicated webpage, develop reporting templates, a list of frequently asked questions, step-by-step instructions, flyers, and webinars to clearly communicate expectations and provide guidance. All resources should be translated into the most common spoken languages.

Haulers may also be required to share educational materials with their customers to promote understanding of available services, such as PAYT and recycling programs. These services may include once-per-year or once-per-quarter mailers focused on program guidelines, contamination reduction, or general participation in recycling and diversion activities, online recycling directories, and phone apps. Recycling education programs help standardize messaging, answer questions, and create community buy-in.

ONLINE REPORTING PLATFORMS

Simplify reporting by developing standardized online templates and submission systems. This approach reduces confusion and administrative burdens for both haulers and municipal staff. There are multiple methods for collecting hauler data, including online third-party dedicated data tracking systems such as Re-TRAC, recording tipping weights at landfills and MRFs, and online forms that haulers submit, such as through an Excel spreadsheet.

COMPLIANCE

Establish systems to manage ordinance compliance effectively and efficiently. For example, hauler trucks may be required to display stickers or carry copies of their licenses. Additionally, information provided by haulers should be cross-checked, such as verifying tonnage reports with weight tickets for quality assurance.

Implement equitable enforcement mechanisms for noncompliance, such as warnings, fines, and suspension. These can align with existing municipal enforcement frameworks. Additionally, provide a reporting system that allows residents and businesses to report unlicensed haulers and submit complaints.

Case Studies

Hauler licensing had been adopted across the United States as well as throughout Texas. This resource includes several case studies with diverse approaches, including one mandating compost collection, a second requiring liquid waste reporting, and a third with requirements based on zoning. Communities exploring similar policies are encouraged to review these municipal examples and consider integrating relevant elements into their own ordinances. Supporting materials, such as sample forms and educational flyers, are also linked for reference.

AUSTIN, TEXAS

Austin Resource Recovery provides residential trash, recycling, and composting services to single-family homes and multifamily properties with up to four dwelling units. Commercial businesses and multifamily properties with five or more units must contract with private haulers, and under [Ordinance No. 20120628-012](#), all entities that collect, remove, or transport waste, recycling, or organics within the City of Austin are required to have a private hauler license.

The license application requires a certificate of insurance for general liability and commercial auto liability, annual Texas Vehicle Inspection Certificates for each licensed vehicle, a tonnage report or remittance form, the names of the facilities to which materials are hauled, and that all collection containers display a landfill, recycling, or organics sticker. An annual license fee of \$400 per solid waste vehicle is collected.

Each licensed vehicle receives two decals to be placed on the driver's and passenger's doors to indicate licensing. Haulers must also submit a semi-annual report detailing the tons of each material type collected, along with proof of vehicle inspection or photos, proof of liability insurance, and the bi-annual tonnage report. Enforcement provisions include fines of up to \$2,000 and potential license revocation for noncompliance.

The private hauler licensing ordinance supports the City's [Universal Recycling Ordinance \(URO\)](#), which requires certain commercial and multifamily properties to provide access to recycling and organics diversion services. Haulers collecting organics are licensed and provide organics diversion data, facilitating accurate tracking of the City's diversion efforts. Additionally, the licensing system exempts vehicle license fees for those carrying recyclables or organics, therefore incentivizing diversion efforts by haulers.

The City has published extensive resources for licensed haulers, including a dedicated webpage categorizing services, step-by-step instructions for applying or renewing a license and adding vehicles, definitions, contact information, and a video outlining licensing requirements. To support enrollment and awareness by constituents, an updated [list of licensed haulers](#) with contact information and service type is available.

Additional information on the City's hauler licensing program, including their [Private Hauler License Application](#) form, is available at the [City of Austin's Get a Private Hauler License webpage](#).

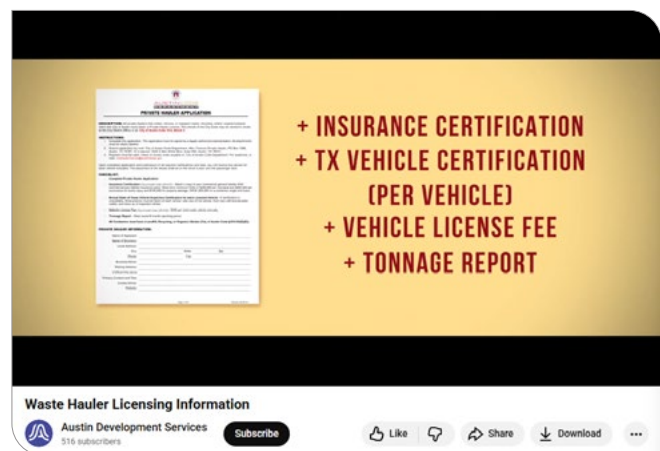


Figure 1: City of Austin Screenshot of Waste Hauler Licensing Information Video

DENTON, TEXAS

The City of Denton's Pretreatment Program, as outlined in [Chapter 24 of the City Code of Ordinance](#), mandates waste hauler permits for the safe collection, transportation, and disposal of special waste, liquid waste, and commercial recyclable materials. The City of Denton's Solid Waste and Recycling Department provides trash, recycling, and yard waste and brush collection services to all residences and commercial businesses but allows for separate collection services for the materials identified in the hauler licensing.

Haulers must submit an application by November 15th for an effective period of January 1st through December 31st, along with a permit fee of \$200, a vehicle registration fee of \$400 per vehicle, and a liquid waste manifest of \$165.

Applications are provided in a [fillable PDF format](#) and require standard contact information, TCEQ registration as applicable, final disposal, processor, transfer, or storage site information, vehicle information (including year, make, plate number, VIN, and capacity), customer information (including address, contact name, and phone number), certification statement, and certificate of insurance. Approved applicants must display decals provided by the City on their vehicles.

The [City of Denton's Waste Hauler Permits](#) webpage provides additional information for haulers to understand the purpose of the program, applicable entities, items deemed special waste and commercial recyclable materials, and contact information to ask additional information or request the status of an application. An annual list of permitted waste haulers is published for constituents to quickly identify.

The form is titled "Collection and Transportation Services Permit Application" and includes a "Total Permit Fees" box at the top right. It is divided into several sections: "Permit Type (check all that apply)", "Applicant Information", and "Service Information". The "Permit Type" section includes checkboxes for Special Waste, Commercial/Recyclable, and Liquid Waste. The "Applicant Information" section includes fields for Name, Address, City, State, Zip, Phone Number, and Email. The "Service Information" section includes fields for TCEQ Registration Number (RN), TCEQ Customer Number (CN), and TCEQ Permit #. The form also includes a "Final Disposal, Processor, Transfer or Storage Site(s)" section. The bottom of the form includes the text "Collection and Transportation Services Permit Application ESS-FRT-FRM-001" and "Page 1 of 6".

Figure 2: City of Denton Collection and Transportation Services Permit Application

BOULDER COUNTY, COLORADO

Boulder County does not provide waste hauling collection services, but requires all hauling companies that collect, transport, or dispose of discarded materials (including trash, recyclables, compostables, construction and demolition materials, aggregate, and landscaping materials) to obtain a hauler license through [Boulder County Ordinance #2019-3](#).

Boulder County's program requires certain services to be offered based on the region of unincorporated Boulder County where the customer resides. All residents are required to be provided with a Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) pricing incentive scheme, but only certain single-family homes must be offered curbside recycling and organics collection. Required regions are periodically updated based on certain considerations, such as population density and area geography.

Haulers must apply for a license and renewal using an online platform, submit a license fee of \$50 for up to three vehicles and \$10 per additional vehicle, and report annually the weight in tons of certain collected material categories and the name of the destination facility of materials. To simplify reporting with other municipalities in the County, many communities with their own licensing requirements utilize the same reporting platform.

The County of Boulder has a dedicated [webpage](#) detailing the license application and renewal process, with resources including the adopted ordinance, reporting instructions, and contact information.

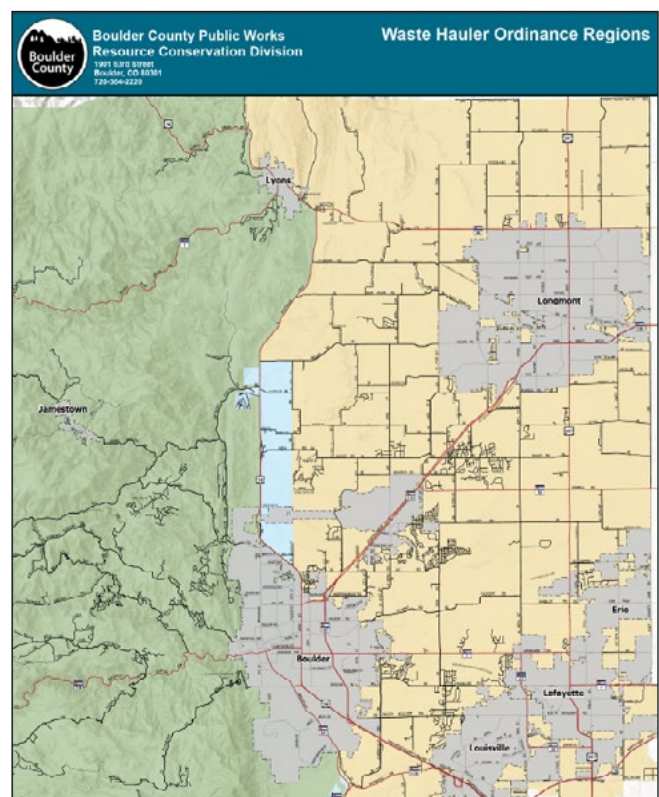


Figure 3: Boulder County Waste Hauler Ordinance Regions Map

Conclusion

Hauler licensing can serve as an effective first step for municipalities to better understand and manage local waste systems by requiring haulers to register and report key data on collection services, operations, and disposal practices. This ordinance and associated program can be a foundation for informed planning, safety compliance, and oversight without requiring direct service contracts. A licensing program can be implemented alongside composting requirements or as a standalone ordinance focused on data collection and accountability, depending on the goals of the community. It also lays the groundwork for expanding organics recycling efforts by helping municipalities build relationships with haulers and processors, assess participation rates, and evaluate regional capacity for organics management.



Photo Sources:

"Waste Hauler Licensing Information." Austin Development Services, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYN02Vlq8VM&t=5s>

"Collection and Transportation Services Solid Waste Permit." City of Denton, 2025, <https://www.cityofdenton.com/DocumentCenter/View/12332/Collection-and-Transportation-Services-SWP-Pe>

"Waste Hauler Regions Map." Boulder County, 2024, <https://assets.bouldercounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Waste-Hauler-Regions-Map-7-25-24.pdf>