



# Media Release

## State Water Board Approves General Order for Composting Operations

**For Immediate Release**  
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**Contact: Tim Moran**  
**(916) 327-8239**

The State Water Resources Control Board today approved a General Order for composting operations aimed at streamlining the permitting process and protecting water quality at new and existing facilities.

The General Order applies to composting operations that process at least 5000 cubic yards of material per year. It exempts most small composting operations, such as home composting or community gardens.

Under the General Order, composting facilities are divided into two tiers, based on the size of the operation and the risk it poses to groundwater or nearby surface water. The General Order sets standards for the construction, operation and maintenance of composting facilities to protect surface water and groundwater. It provides a number of requirements, including standards for the permeability of the ground underneath the composting piles, drainage, and specifications for leachate collection and containment. The Order will also include requirements for monitoring and reporting.

The State Water Board recognizes the many benefits of composting organic material, which include recycling nutrients, diverting materials from landfills and creating a valuable soil amendment. Composting offers a substantial method for reducing California's solid waste stream, and the state has set a goal of reducing the solid waste stream by 75 percent by 2020. Almost a third of California's 35 million tons of waste generated each year is compostable organic material. It is expected that the number of composting facilities in the state could double or triple to meet the 75 percent goal.

At the same time, large composting operations pose potential threats to both surface and groundwater if they are not properly sited, designed and managed. An outdoor composting facility can produce a liquid called leachate, which may contain pollutants such as pesticides, metals, salts, pathogens and nitrates. If the leachate isn't controlled or contained, it can run off into surface streams or seep into the groundwater.

Composting facilities have previously been regulated by the state's nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards through Waste Discharge Requirements or waivers of Waste Discharge Requirements.

A statewide order for composting operations will result in a streamlined and efficient permit process; will reduce permitting delays; and will allow the Regional Water Quality Control Boards the ability to be more responsive to the expected increase in the number of composting operations.





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For more information, visit the State Water Board's [composting web site](#).

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