

Did you know...

WA's overall recovery rate is 49%, significantly higher than the national average of 32%. We recycle at least 40% of our packaging.

WA's solid waste and recycling industry was 4.1x carbon net zero in 2018 after accounting for landfill and collection emissions and the reduction of greenhouse gases from more materials successfully recycled or composted.

WA is already working to divert 75% of organics waste from landfills by 2030 (HB 1799), resulting in **552,000 fewer tons of greenhouse gas emissions**.

87% of WA residents have access to curbside service and those who don't may access 108 dropbox locations in their communities.

The average household's monthly bill for curbside recycling service is \$8-10, supporting an average of 8 monthly bin pickups of bins for trash (4), recycling (2) and organics (2), with service unique to local needs.

The solid waste and recycling industry **employs about 14,700 workers** to drive trucks, sort materials at Material Recovery Facilities, oversee landfills and much more.

Trusted, Proven Approach to Service

Since 1961, Washington State has enforced a regulated recycling and solid waste system that prioritizes universal service, transparent operations, consumer protection and environmental stewardship. The foundation of these services is called the **Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity** or a "**G Certificate**." The Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) regulates solid waste and residential recycling collection in Washington. The UTC grants regulated companies an exclusive obligation to provide commercial and residential garbage, residential recycling, and yard waste to everyone within a geographic territory. As with other utilities such as electricity and water, a G Certificate company provides universal service to all customers that is supported by rates, transparent service levels, costs and expenses. Just as with water and power rates, along with related service delivery costs, solid waste service rates are subject to review and approval by local Councils. G Certificate operations and consumer charges are also subject to approval by the UTC and rigorous enforcement, including financial penalties for violations.

What is the "G" in "G Certificate"?

The G Certificate exists to protect consumers and uphold reliable, affordable and universal service. It also allows for long-term private investment to provide a public resource – waste management and recycling – at a predictable and stable level of service. The goal of this regulatory approach allows for:

Great Safety: The safety of workers and customers is the number one priority for all G Certificate companies, a standard upheld by numerous regulations/statutes.

Great Service: Approximately 6.9 million Washingtonians receive regular curbside service by G Certificate companies with an average of 8 monthly pickups. Waste management is an essential public health service and Washington's recycling facilities are also the first link in the supply chain for essential goods, especially paper.

Great Efficiency: A single truck drives down your street transporting the contents of your bins to a nearby sorting and processing facility, instead of several different trucks from different companies every day. This allows for approximately 600,000 tons of material to be picked up and sorted for recycling every year.

Great Accessibility: Subject to strict regulations to enforce price and service transparency, setting up service is like flipping a switch.

Great Accountability: In addition to strong safety and consumer protection rules at the UTC, G Certificate companies are regulated at the state and local level. Counties set local levels of service and policy by ordinance and comprehensive solid waste plans. If a regulated company fails to provide service, the UTC can issue fines or grant authority to another company. The UTC enforcement program also investigates illegal waste haulers and sham recyclers. New statewide requirements and expanded curbside recycling are under development following the Recycling Reform Act in the 2025 Legislative Session.

How does the public benefit?

Historically, utilities and services such as solid waste and recycling have been subject to regulation in order to protect consumers from higher costs, ensure quality service, enforce environmental protections and support consumer access. Full or partial deregulation of electricity markets, telecommunications, trucking and airlines have led to service disruptions, hidden fees and reduced access outside of urban centers.

Common Questions about the G Certificate in Washington

<p>Federal legislation deregulated construction solid waste and recycling services in 1994. What happened?</p>	<p>While the regulated sector continues to proudly partner with contractors to responsibly sort, transport and dispose of their recyclables, deregulation has led to the spread of private equity funded unregulated operators competing at a lower cost and lower standards. The UTC Solid Waste Enforcement Program investigates complaints issues penalties to suspected illegal haulers.</p>
<p>G Certificates grant a kind of monopoly – what do consumers get in return?</p>	<p>Just as water, electrical and other utilities are granted the obligation to provide a service exclusively in a defined geography to everyone that subscribes, solid waste and recycling services are required to provide universal access to their customers. As with other utilities, any increase to rates is subject to a regulator’s review and approval along with consumer protections and penalties for missed service, among other requirements.</p>
<p>What is a “sham recycler”?</p>	<p>A “sham recycler” is a company claiming to be a recycler that approaches a commercial customer and offers to haul the customer’s recyclable materials to a recycling facility where, it’s claimed, the material will be recycled. Sham recyclers can charge less than regulated companies and often do not require the customer to separate recyclables from other wastes. That waste may all go to a landfill instead of being recycled or end up to a landfill without the same standards as the regulated sector, leading to other environmental impacts to local communities. In the end, the customer, regulated companies following the rules, and the environment all lose.</p>
<p>Who has a G Certificate in Washington?</p>	<p>The regulated solid waste and recycling sector hold G Certificates in our state – currently, there are 51 G Certificates held by regulated companies. These are private companies that are multigenerational family-owned, multinational and publicly-traded and everything in between. G Certificated companies are subject to strict, on-going oversight by multiple state & federal regulators.</p>
<p>Will the G Certificate change with the Recycling Reform Act & Extended Producer Responsibility?</p>	<p>No. In 2025, the Washington legislature adopted SB 5284, the Recycling Reform Act, an extended Producer Responsibility Program for the most common forms of packaging in curbside recycling. Recycling in Washington will expand and change with the RRA, but WRRRA members with G Certificates and Municipal Recycling Contracts will be key service providers. The RRA explicitly recognizes the successful public-private partnership in Washington between local government, service providers, and the Utilities & Transportation Commission requires Municipal Contractors or G Certificated service providers for curbside collection services.</p>

About Us

The Washington Refuse & Recycling Association (WRRRA) represents solid waste companies and professionals in Washington State. Our mission is to promote environmentally and economically sustainable solid waste and recycling services within our state’s regulatory system. The WRRRA is a partnership with the public in pursuit of environmental stewardship through recycling and reducing waste.

Want to Learn More? Please contact Brad Lovaas, WRRRA executive director, at brad@wrra.org or (360) 280-7723.