

WET TRASH 101

What happens when rain mixes with garbage?



RAIN + EXPOSED WASTE = AVOIDABLE CONTACT WATER

The issue is the pathway: rain reaches waste, water contacts residue, containment determines whether it escapes, and pavement determines where it goes next.



RAIN GETS IN

Open lids, overflow, uncovered waste and damaged containers allow precipitation to contact waste.



WASTE GETS WET

Cardboard, food waste, paper, residue and loose material can hold water or release pollutants.



WATER GETS OUT

Leaks, holes, failed seams, splash and overflow can move contact water onto the enclosure pad.



PAVEMENT CARRIES IT

Slope, gutters, trench drains and storm inlets determine where the water goes next.



SOURCE CONTROL STOPS IT

Close lids, prevent overflow, repair leaks, sweep loose waste and keep wash water out of storm drains.

Sources: U.S. EPA industrial stormwater guidance; CASQA SC-34 Waste Handling & Disposal. Site-specific rules vary.

WET TRASH 101

Three facts, five quick checks, and the claims we do not make.

0.623 GAL

Approx. water from 1 inch of rain on 1 square foot.

8.34 LB/GAL

Approx. weight of water.

KEEP IT DRY

Recovered-paper specs include moisture limits.

THE 60-SECOND CHECK



CLOSE EVERY LID

Make sure lids can close fully.



PICK UP LOOSE TRASH

Remove material wind or runoff can move.



CHECK FOR LEAKS

Look for holes, wet staining or dripping.



PREVENT OVERFLOW

Service capacity should allow lids to close.



KEEP DRAINS CLEAR

Do not sweep litter into a storm drain.

WHAT RESPONSIBLE EDUCATION DOES NOT CLAIM

- A roof alone does not guarantee compliance.
- Not every gallon of rain becomes hauled weight.
- Not every wet recycling load is landfilled.
- Local costs, pollutant loads and savings need local data.

Adopt-A-Dumpster™ public education. Keep rain out. Keep waste in. Protect what is downstream.

RAIN ADDS UP FAST

Even one inch of rain is a lot of water when it lands on an exposed waste area.



THE BASIC RAINFALL MATH

Gross rain volume = exposed horizontal area × rainfall depth × 0.623 gallons per square foot-inch.

100 FT² × 1 IN

About 62 gallons of gross precipitation.

176 FT² × 1 IN

About 110 gallons. The water itself weighs about 914 lb before losses.

200 FT² × 1 IN

About 125 gallons of gross precipitation.

IMPORTANT

Gross precipitation is not the same as retained or billed wet weight. Drainage, evaporation and timing matter.

USE THE NUMBER CORRECTLY

Call it gross rainfall exposure unless local wet/dry scale data shows how much water actually remains in the waste.

Sources: U.S. Geological Survey water properties; U.S. EPA industrial stormwater guidance.

WET CARDBOARD & RECYCLING

Cardboard is easiest to recover when it stays clean, dry, and separated from food and mixed waste.



WHY DRY FIBER MATTERS

QUALITY

Water softens and collapses boxes, making material harder to handle.

WEIGHT

Excess moisture adds shipment weight without adding usable fiber.

ACCEPTANCE

Recovered-paper specifications include moisture limits and can allow adjustment or rejection.

BETTER HABIT

Flatten boxes. Keep them below the rim. Keep lids closed and cardboard protected from rain.

WHAT WE DO NOT CLAIM

Wet cardboard is not automatically landfilled. Actual outcomes depend on moisture, contamination, local MRF practices and contracts.

Source: ReMA / ISRI recovered-paper specifications. Local recycling rules and acceptance criteria vary.

LEAKS, RUST & CONTAINER CONDITION

Surface rust is a warning. Loss of containment is the stronger operational concern.

LOOK FOR CONTAINMENT FAILURE



RUST-THROUGH

Holes or pinholes in the floor or lower sidewalls.



FAILED SEAMS

Cracked or failed welded seams and corners.



WET STAINING

Recurring wet areas at the base of a container.



WET TRAIL

Liquid visibly moving beyond the enclosure.



DAMAGED LIDS

Lids that no longer close allow more rain-waste contact.

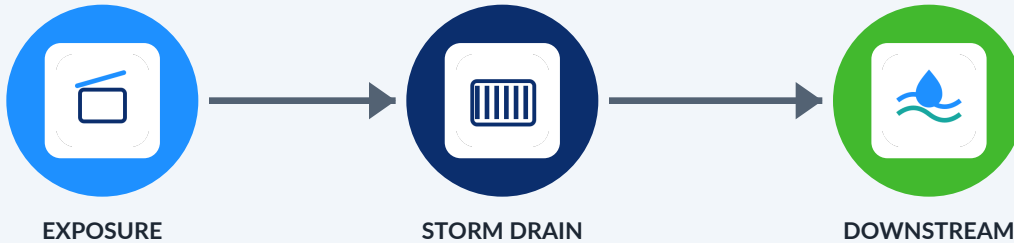
THE LEAK MATTERS MORE THAN THE RUST

A rusty surface may be cosmetic or early-stage deterioration. A hole, failed seam, or active leak creates a direct pathway from the container to the pad.

Source: CASQA SC-34 Waste Handling & Disposal. Photograph the failure point, the pad, and the downstream path.

DUMPSTER TO STORM DRAIN

Follow the physical pathway from exposed waste to pavement, drainage infrastructure, and downstream water.



THE PATHWAY

1

RAIN REACHES WASTE

Open lids, overflow, loose trash, or dirty pavement create exposure.

2

WATER CONTACTS RESIDUE

Food, grease, sediment, paper, plastics, and other materials can be picked up.

3

LIQUID ESCAPES

Leaks, splash, overflow, or site drainage move water across pavement.

4

PAVEMENT CONVEYS IT

Slope, gutters, trench drains, and inlets determine where it goes.

5

SOURCE CONTROL BREAKS IT

Close lids, repair leaks, prevent overflow, and keep drains clear.

Sources: U.S. EPA Trash Free Waters; EPA stormwater good-housekeeping guidance. Verify unknown drain destinations.

60-SECOND DUMPSTER CHECK

A fast weekly check for businesses, property managers, and maintenance teams.



LID

Closed and working?



GROUND

No loose trash, leaks, or staining?



DRAIN

Nothing flowing toward a storm drain?



CAPACITY

Not overflowing? Service schedule adequate?



REPORT

Damage or leaks reported promptly?

WET TRASH: MUNICIPAL BRIEF

A source-control issue that sits at the intersection of stormwater, solid waste, property maintenance, recycling, and public works.

WHAT A CITY CAN SAY WITH CONFIDENCE

EXPOSURE CONTROL

EPA stormwater guidance treats closed dumpster lids and minimizing exposure as good-housekeeping controls.

WASTE HANDLING

CASQA SC-34 calls for covered containers, leak/lid checks, dry cleanup, and keeping wash water out of storm drains.

RECYCLING

Recovered-paper specifications include moisture limits because excess water affects material and shipment weight.

MOSQUITOES

CDC guidance includes trash containers among water-holding items that should be emptied, covered, or discarded.

ESCAPED TRASH

EPA explains that rain and wind can move poorly contained garbage toward storm drains and waterways.

IMPORTANT CLAIMS GUARDRAIL

Do not call every uncovered dumpster a federal violation, do not claim a roof alone guarantees MS4 compliance, and do not publish fixed local cost or pollutant numbers without local data.

Sources: U.S. EPA industrial stormwater guidance; CASQA SC-34; ReMA recovered-paper specs; CDC mosquito guidance.

A PRACTICAL WET TRASH PROGRAM

Begin with education and observation, then measure a small local pilot before making cost or pollutant claims.

1

INVENTORY

Identify high-exposure commercial waste areas.

2

EDUCATE

Give property owners and employees a simple pre-rain checklist.

3

STANDARDIZE

Record lids, overflow, leaks, staining, loose trash, and drainage consistently.

4

SEPARATE ROLES

Distinguish property housekeeping from hauler container maintenance.

5

VERIFY DRAINS

Determine whether enclosure drains connect to storm, sanitary, or another system.

6

MEASURE

Use paired wet/dry scale data, selected lab samples, and MRF/hauler feedback.

7

REPORT

Separate measured outcomes from modeled estimates.

8

SCALE

Use owner participation, hauler coordination, capital planning, sponsorship, or local requirements.

THE LOCAL DATA THAT CHANGES THE CONVERSATION

Retained wet weight, contact-water chemistry, recycling rejection, and drainage destinations are stronger when measured locally rather than assumed nationally.

Use Wet Trash 101 as the public education layer. Keep legal conclusions and permit-specific findings with the responsible agency.