

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Do not call every uncovered dumpster a federal violation, do not claim a roof alone guarantees MS4 compliance, and do not publish fixed local cost or pollutant numbers without local data.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