



Natural Wood Waste Recycling in Maryland

What You Need to Know

A Natural Wood Waste Recycling Facility (NWWRF) is a facility that accepts and processes wood waste such as tree logs, stumps, and limbs. Natural wood waste is usually generated when land is cleared for construction purposes. Natural wood waste does not include “yard waste,” which is plant waste derived from household gardening, landscaping, and tree trimming activities, but can include the leaves, twigs, and limbs that are part of the brush and trees derived from the clearing of land. A NWWRF produces a variety of products from this waste including mulch and compost, and sells it to consumers or otherwise distributes it to offsite users. These facilities are valued because they take a waste product that would otherwise go to a landfill and make it into something useful. Recycling natural wood waste saves valuable landfill space, extending the life of the State’s landfills.

Regulations and Policy

The Natural Wood Waste regulations were adopted in 1992. Any person or company engaging in natural wood waste recycling activities must be regulated under Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 26.04.09, available online at http://www.dsd.state.md.us/COMAR/SubtitleSearch.aspx?search=26.04.09.*

MDE views natural wood waste as vegetation, in its natural state, that has been discarded or designated for disposal. This would not include crates, lumber, furniture, firewood, or other products that may have been made from wood but have subsequently been processed. Facilities that accept these types of materials are not required to obtain a NWWRF Permit from MDE; however, they may be subject to the regulations at COMAR 26.04.11, Composting Facilities, which are available online at http://www.dsd.state.md.us/comar/SubtitleSearch.aspx?search=26.04.11.*

Alternatively, depending on whether the material to be composted is sorted or processed at the site where they are composted, Refuse Disposal Permit for a Processing Facility or Land Clearing Debris Landfill might be required, depending on the source(s) and method(s) of managing the material. These regulations are codified in COMAR 26.04.07, Solid Waste Management, and are available online at http://www.dsd.state.md.us/COMAR/SubtitleSearch.aspx?search=26.04.07.*

Who Needs to Comply With The Natural Wood Waste Regulations?

Owners or operators of the facilities which will receive or process natural wood waste (trees, stumps, tree trunks, limbs, roots, or other materials derived from natural vegetation such as “hogged”, “first-grind” and “second-grind” wood chunks) and market this material must obtain a permit from MDE. A NWWRF does not include a collection or processing facility operated by a nonprofit or governmental organization located in the State, or single individual or business that provides recycling services solely for its own employees or for its own recyclable materials generated on its own premises. Also, if the material is being ground up and used for mulch or composted at the site where it was generated – e.g., the parcel where the trees were cleared – and the mulch is not sold or distributed offsite, then a NWWRF permit is not required. There is no application or permit fee by MDE for NWWRF permit applications, although there may be some costs associated with satisfying the requirements of the regulation. If you wish to find out more about the requirements of these regulations, please contact the Solid Waste Program at (410)537-3315, or 1-800-633-6101, extension 3315, or visit the “Permits” tab on our website at <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Permits/Pages/index.aspx>.