

Advancing Sustainable Materials Management/2018 Fact Sheet: November 2020 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Report



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The United States Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA") published a November 2020 report titled:

Advancing Sustainable Materials Management: 2018 Fact Sheet ("Report")

The *Report* is subtitled:

Assessing Trends in Materials Generation and Management in the United States

EPA has for a number of years annually published this *Report* which includes information addressing:

- Municipal Solid Waste Generation
- Recycling
- Composting
- Waste Food Management
- Combustion with Energy Recovery
- Landfilling

EPA states that such information is used to judge the success of materials management programs in the United States. It is also utilized to annually characterize the national waste stream. The *Report's* data is based on the most recent information available to the agency which is calendar year 2018.

A summary of key data includes:

- 292 tons of municipal solid waste were generated
- 69 million tons of the municipal solid waste were recycled
- 25 million tons of the municipal solid waste were composted
- 32.1 percent of municipal solid waste was recycled and composted
- 18 million tons of food were processed through other food management pathways
- 34 million tons of municipal solid waste were combusted with energy recovery
- More than 146 million tons of municipal solid waste were landfilled

Note that the reference to tons in the *Report* are U.S. short tons unless otherwise specified. In addition, the term municipal solid waste includes items consumers throw away such as packaging, food, yard trimmings, furniture, electronics, tires and appliances. It, therefore, does not include industrial, hazardous or construction and debris waste.

A key statistic from the *Report* is the determination that despite the fact that more tons were recycled in 2018, the recycling rate decreased to the lowest level since 2006.

The *Report* also addresses economic indicators associated with recycling. The federal agency's 2020 Recycling Economic Information Report provides data regarding the number of recycling jobs, wages and tax revenue. Data from the most recent year available is stated to have indicated that in 2012 recycling and reuse activities in the United States accounted for:

- 681,000 jobs
- \$37.8 billion in wages
- \$5.5 billion in tax revenues

Ferrous metal is stated to have provided the largest contribution to all three categories. The other categories included construction and demolition debris and nonferrous metals.

Other topics addressed by the *Report* include:

- Recycled commodity values
- Landfill Tipping Fees
- Municipal Solid Waste Generation and Household Spending
- Municipal Solid Waste Methodology
- Construction and Demolition Debris

A copy of the *Report* can be downloaded [here](#).