

**FINAL-FORM RULEMAKING  
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BOARD  
[25 PA. CODE CHS. 271 AND 279]**

**Municipal Waste Rural Transfer Facility Permit-By-Rule**

The Environmental Quality Board (Board) amends Chapters 271 and 279 (relating to municipal waste management—general provisions; and transfer facilities) to update the regulations to read as set forth in Annex A. This final-form rulemaking amends Chapter 271 to establish requirements for operating a Rural Transfer Facility under a permit-by-rule. The amendment to Chapter 279 clarifies that the requirements of that chapter are not applicable to Rural Transfer Facilities.

This final-form rulemaking was adopted by the Board at its meeting of **DATE**.

*A. Effective Date*

This final-form rulemaking will be effective upon publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

*B. Contact Persons*

For further information, contact Ali Tarquino Morris, Director, Bureau of Waste Management, P.O. Box 69170, Rachel Carson State Office Building, Harrisburg, PA 17106-9170, (717) 783-7827; or Nikolina Smith, Assistant Counsel, Bureau of Regulatory Counsel, P.O. Box 8464, Rachel Carson State Office Building, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8464, (717) 783-8501. Persons with a disability may use the Pennsylvania Hamilton Relay Service, (800) 654-5984 (TDD users) or (800) 654-5988 (voice users). This final-form rulemaking is available on the Department of Environmental Protection's (Department) website at [www.dep.pa.gov](http://www.dep.pa.gov) (select "Public Participation," then "Environmental Quality Board" and then navigate to the Board meeting of **DATE**).

*C. Statutory Authority*

This final-form rulemaking is authorized under sections 105 and 501 of the Solid Waste Management Act (35 P.S. §§ 6018.105 and 6018.501), which grant the Board the authority to adopt rules and regulations of the Department to accomplish the purposes and carry out the provisions of the Solid Waste Management Act; sections 301 and 302 of Act 101, the Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling and Waste Reduction Act (53 P.S. §§ 4001.301 and 4001.302); and section 1920-A of The Administrative Code of 1929 (71 P.S. § 510-20), which grant the Board the authority to adopt rules and regulations for the proper performance of the work of the Department.

*D. Background and Purpose*

Presently, all residents of this Commonwealth do not have convenient and affordable access to waste disposal and recycling options. Specifically, in rural areas of this Commonwealth trash collection and recycling services are not economically feasible to establish and therefore unavailable to many local communities. This lack of access results in residential waste and

recycling being mismanaged through illegal dumping or open burning of the waste, which cause environmental degradation and place a significant strain on the Department and local governments to clean up.

For context, a 10-year study (partially funded by the Department) was conducted by Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful in which more than 6,200 illegal dumps were identified across this Commonwealth. The study found that cleanups of illegal dump sites cost on average \$3,000 per site and divert funding and staff resources from State and local governments that could otherwise be used more productively. It also conveyed that there is less illegal dumping in areas where there is universal access to waste and recycling collection and more than 87% of residents of this Commonwealth indicated they would be willing to take their household waste, recyclables or other items not collected at the curb to a convenient outlet and pay for the service.

Additionally, open burning of waste also can be a dangerous and environmentally hazardous activity. According to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, one of the major causes of forest fires in this Commonwealth is debris burning. A careless or unaware person burning trash or yard waste can be responsible for causing wildfires that burn thousands of acres of valuable forests. In fact, 98% of the wildfires in this Commonwealth are a direct result of people's actions and place emergency responders directly in harm's way. Furthermore, a United States Environmental Protection Agency report published in November 1997 shows that a single household burn barrel may emit as many toxic chemicals as a well-controlled municipal incinerator.

To address the waste and recycling collection gap that currently exists in the more rural areas of this Commonwealth and help to prevent illegal dumping and burning of waste, the Board establishes a permit-by-rule framework for persons to construct and operate rural transfer facilities. A rural transfer facility is a facility located in a municipality with a population density of under 300 people per square mile where residents can drop off municipal waste and source separated recyclable materials that the operators of the facility would then transfer to a permitted processing or disposal facility.

This final-form rulemaking creates a permit-by-rule framework for authorizing rural transfer facilities operations. A permit-by-rule is a permit which a person or municipality is deemed to have for the operation of a facility or an activity upon compliance with the general requirements contained in the regulations authorizing the permit-by-rule in § 271.103 (relating to permit-by-rule for municipal waste processing facilities other than for regulated medical or chemotherapeutic waste; qualifying facilities; general requirements) and the requirements contained in this final-form rulemaking.

Under the permit-by-rule format, public or private entities would notify the Department of their intent to operate a rural transfer facility and would not have to submit an application for review. This simplifies the application requirements associated with other types of permitted facilities by replacing voluminous application materials with more general operational plans and notification documents while still protecting the health, safety and welfare of residents of this Commonwealth and the environment.

A facility operating under a permit-by-rule must follow a standard and abbreviated set of operating requirements that are tailored for the type of activity undertaken. As noted previously, the permit-by-rule for rural transfer facilities is only be available for sites located in rural areas with a population density of under 300 people per square mile. Rural transfer facilities are also limited in the amount of waste they can manage onsite to 80 cubic yards of municipal waste stored in a maximum of 4 containers. In general, this and other thresholds in this final-form rulemaking are based on those that were included in the draft general permit the Department previously proposed to authorize what were referred to as convenience centers. The Department worked closely with regional waste program managers and the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) to determine appropriate thresholds as described as follows. These thresholds were also based on information the Department had about existing individually permitted municipal waste transfer facilities, including how much waste these facilities accept on a quarterly or annual basis. The thresholds represent and establish an appropriate amount of waste to be managed at a small rural transfer facility that will meet the needs of rural communities without approaching amounts that would require the facility to obtain an individual permit. Further explanation of the thresholds and full operating requirements for the rural transfer facilities permit-by-rule are outlined as follows. If the facility fails to comply with the conditions of the permit-by-rule as specified in this rulemaking, the facility may be required to obtain an individual or general permit instead.

This final-form rulemaking was developed in consultation with the Department's SWAC and Recycling Fund Advisory Committee (RFAC). Members of SWAC and RFAC represent municipal solid waste authorities, local government interests, solid waste management industry groups, the legislature, consulting firms and private citizens.

Discussions formally began in 2015, with the formation of an Ad Hoc committee to focus on developing a model for what were then known as convenience centers and advise the Department on the requirements for operation. The Ad Hoc committee disbanded after its final meeting in August 2015.

The convenience center model evolved over the next several years, until the Department developed a general permit (GP) to authorize their operation. The Department brought the GP before SWAC and RFAC in December 2018, at which time it was determined that the recordkeeping requirements of the GP were too onerous for operators (that is, rural counties and municipalities) to meet. However, SWAC and RFAC members and the Department agreed that a means of authorizing operation of these facilities to aid in providing convenient, affordable access to waste disposal and recycling to all residents of this Commonwealth was imperative. The Department responded by developing this proposed rulemaking to authorize a permit-by-rule for rural transfer facilities. On June 3, 2020, SWAC voted to concur with the Department's recommendation that the proposed rulemaking move forward in the regulatory process. The Department discussed this final-form rulemaking with SWAC on June 14, 2022, and SWAC voted to concur with the Department's recommendation that the final rulemaking be presented to the EQB for consideration.

*E. Summary of Final-Form Rulemaking and Changes from Proposed to Final-Form Rulemaking*

*§ 271.103. Permit-by-rule for municipal waste processing facilities other than for regulated medical or chemotherapeutic waste; qualifying facilities; general requirements*

Amendments to this section add provisions for the operation of a rural transfer facility authorized through a permit-by-rule.

Subsection (i) is added to authorize operation of a rural transfer facility through a permit-by-rule under certain conditions. The permit-by-rule format streamlines and reduces costs associated with permitting and obtaining the authorizations necessary to establish and operate a transfer facility. This allows persons or municipalities in rural areas more flexibility and ease in constructing, siting and operating the facility, in conjunction with the added benefit of reducing illegal dumping and better serving residents of rural areas while still being protective of public health and the environment.

Paragraph (1) specifies operating requirements that a rural transfer facility must follow to receive authorization under this permit-by-rule. These requirements are intended to ensure rural transfer facilities are operating in a way that ensures the health, safety and welfare of residents of this Commonwealth and the environment are protected.

Subparagraph (i) describes the types of wastes that may be transferred through a rural transfer facility. It specifies that no processing other than the transfer of residential municipal waste, construction/demolition waste and yard waste take place at the rural transfer facility since this is a permit-by-rule for municipal waste specifically. As such, the only materials that may be accepted at a rural transfer facility are municipal wastes as defined elsewhere in statute and regulation. See 35 P.S. § 6018.103 and 25 Pa. Code § 271.1 (relating to definitions). Construction/demolition and yard waste are both classified as municipal wastes and are specifically identified to clarify what wastes are acceptable for management at a rural transfer facility.

Subparagraph (ii) requires the rural transfer facility to collect steel and bimetallic cans, corrugated cardboard and aluminum, at a minimum, for the purpose of recycling. This requirement is included in order to capture more recyclables, which contributes to this Commonwealth's recycling marketplace and helps support the 66,000 recycling-related jobs it provides.

Subparagraph (iii) specifies that a rural transfer facility may not collect or process any liquid, special handling waste, residual waste or hazardous waste. Management of these types of wastes by regulation requires additional scrutiny and approval for management and is not suitable for this municipal waste permit-by-rule.

Subparagraph (iv) places limits on the volume of municipal waste that can be stored at a rural transfer facility prior to transfer. This final-form rulemaking sets these limits at 80 cubic yards stored in a maximum of 4 containers at a facility. These limits do not apply to construction and demolition (C&D) waste nor yard waste as they have their own limits specified in § 271.103(i)(2) and (3). These thresholds are based on information the Department has about existing individually permitted municipal waste transfer facilities, including how much waste

these facilities accept on a quarterly or annual basis. The thresholds represent an appropriate amount of waste to be managed at a small rural transfer facility to meet the needs of rural communities without approaching amounts that would require the facility to obtain an individual permit. The volume thresholds were established to limit the size and impact of these facilities so the less rigorous permit-by-rule framework for construction and operation can be utilized.

Subparagraph (v) specifies that containers at rural transfer facilities be emptied at least once every 10 days. The total waste collected, excluding C&D and yard waste, cannot exceed 160 cubic yards during that same 10-day period, and all containers must be emptied within 72 hours of being filled. Similar to the reasoning discussed previously for the requirements in § 271.103(iv), these volume and storage thresholds were established to limit the size and impact of these facilities and so the less rigorous permit-by-rule framework for construction and operation can be utilized. Time limits for emptying containers were specifically established to minimize the potential for nuisances associated with operation of the facility.

Subparagraph (vi) requires that records of pick up dates for all containers at a rural transfer facility be kept onsite for 5 years and made available to the Department upon request. These requirements are consistent with those already established for other facilities authorized by a permit-by-rule in this section. The additional requirement to keep records onsite for 5 years ensures that the Department can collect data on the facilities to evaluate the effectiveness of the rulemaking.

Subparagraph (vii) specifies that a rural transfer facility cannot cause or allow a point or nonpoint source discharge from or on the facility to surface waters of this Commonwealth. This requirement is included to maintain compliance with The Clean Streams Law (35 P.S. §§ 691.1—691.1001) and protect the waters of the Commonwealth.

Subparagraph (viii) states prohibitions on the areas in which rural transfer facilities may be located. These prohibited areas include: a populated area as described in § 272.411(a) and (b) (relating to affected municipalities) and section 1501(a) and (b) of the Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling and Waste Reduction Act (53 P.S. § 4000.1501(a) and (b)); a municipality with a population density over 300 people per square mile; or an area that is zoned as residential, unless otherwise approved in writing by a municipality. Municipalities with a population density over 300 people per square mile is used in section 1501(b) of the Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling and Waste Reduction Act and was included in the list of prohibited areas because municipalities with a population density exceeding this threshold already have recycling and waste management infrastructure. The intent of this final-form rulemaking is to facilitate and establish access to waste management and recycling services in the underserved rural areas of this Commonwealth. The defined areas described previously are not considered rural or underserved and are, therefore, not suitable for siting and operation of a rural transfer facility.

Subparagraph (ix) requires that the rural transfer facility not store waste, yard waste or source separated recyclable materials outside of a container in order to protect human health and the environment by preventing nuisances, vectors, and point and nonpoint source pollution. These requirements also aim to protect the market value of recyclable materials collected by preventing contamination during management.

Subparagraph (x) prohibits a rural transfer facility from accepting waste transported by a truck, tractor or combination having a gross vehicle weight rating, gross combination weight rating, registered gross weight, registered combination weight or actual gross weight of 17,001 pounds or more. These vehicle weight limits are established in the regulations implementing the Commonwealth's Vehicle Code at 67 Pa. Code § 231.8(1) (relating to additions or modifications to 49 CFR) and trigger additional authorization and licensing under 27 Pa.C.S. §§ 6201—6209 (Act 90) (relating to Waste Transportation Safety Act). Rural transfer facilities are not an acceptable destination for vehicles exceeding these weight limits, as they carry an amount of waste that would exceed the volume and storage limits established by the permit-by-rule. Use of a rural transfer facility by these size vehicles would negate the potential benefits of convenient and affordable disposal and recycling for local residents.

Subparagraph (xi) requires that rural transfer facilities must be operated in a manner to minimize and control nuisances and vectors to protect human health and the environment. Facilities that do not meet this requirement may be required to obtain an individual or general permit under § 271.103(c).

Subparagraph (xii) requires that rural transfer facilities store source separated recyclable materials in a manner that preserves their marketability. This requirement is intended to ensure that recyclables are not damaged and ultimately are able to be recycled to help bolster this Commonwealth's recycling marketplace.

Subparagraph (xiii) requires an operator of a rural transfer facility to submit written notice to the Department when intending to operate a facility under the permit-by-rule. As specified in clause (A), the notice must be submitted to the Department within 30 days of adoption of this final-form rulemaking and by January 31 every 5 years after the initial notice. As specified in clause (B), for any rural transfer facilities that are constructed after the effective date of the final-form rulemaking, operators shall submit written notice to the Department at least 30 days before beginning operations and by January 31 every 5 years after the initial notice. As specified in clause (C), the written notice shall contain the following information: the contact information and address of the rural transfer facility; proposed hours of operation; the contact information and address of the person or municipality responsible for operating the facility; a brief description of the facility; and the name and address of the facilities to which the rural transfer facility transfers municipal waste. If there are any changes to the facilities to which a rural transfer facility transfers waste, the rural transfer facility operator shall notify the Department within 15 days of the change. These notification requirements are consistent with requirements for existing municipal waste permit-by-rule facilities in § 271.103(d) and (e)—(h). Notification also allows the Department to accurately identify the universe of rural transfer facilities operating in this Commonwealth and the disposal facilities they utilize.

Subparagraph (xiv) requires that the operator post and maintain signs at the rural transfer facility. Clauses (A)—(D) require that the signs include the facility name, hours of operation, a list of accepted materials, and the contact information and address of the facility operator. This subparagraph is consistent with existing site identification and signage requirements. These requirements allow for proper identification of the rural transfer facility site; provide emergency contact information to users; and provide clarity about what materials are able to be managed at the facility.

Paragraph (2) allows rural transfer facilities to provide for the collection of C&D waste in addition to the volumes permitted in § 271.103(i)(1)(iv) as long as the following two conditions are met. The volume of C&D waste stored at the rural transfer facility cannot exceed 40 cubic yards and be stored in a maximum of 2 containers as proposed in subparagraph (i), and the containers are removed and taken to a permitted processing or disposal facility at least once every 10 days as specified in subparagraph (ii). These requirements are based on information the Department has about existing individually permitted municipal waste transfer facilities, including how much waste these facilities accept on a quarterly or annual basis, and allow for limited management of C&D waste while protecting the overall intent of the rulemaking, which is to provide convenient and affordable access to disposal of municipal waste and management of recyclables to underserved areas of this Commonwealth.

Paragraph (3) allows a rural transfer facility to provide for the collection of yard waste in addition to the volumes permitted in § 271.103(i)(1)(iv) as long as the following two conditions are met. The volume of yard waste stored at the rural transfer facility cannot exceed 40 cubic yards and be stored in a maximum of 2 containers as proposed in subparagraph (i), and the containers are removed at least every 10 days and taken to a composting facility, land application site or other facility permitted for the beneficial use of yard waste as specified in subparagraph (ii). These requirements are based on information the Department has about existing individually permitted municipal waste transfer facilities, including how much waste these facilities accept on a quarterly or annual basis, and allow for limited management of yard waste while protecting the overall intent of the rulemaking, which is to provide convenient and affordable access to disposal of municipal waste and management of recyclables to underserved areas of this Commonwealth.

#### *§ 279.1. Scope*

Subsection (a) is amended to clarify that the application and operating requirements for transfer facilities established in Chapter 279 do not apply to rural transfer facilities operating under a permit-by-rule, as these facilities are now authorized under § 271.103(i).

#### *Changes from Proposed to Final-Form Rulemaking*

There were no changes made to the regulation from the proposed rulemaking to this final-form rulemaking.

#### *F. Summary of Comments and Responses on the Proposed Rulemaking*

The proposed rulemaking was published on January 15, 2022, opening a 30-day public comment period.

The Board received no comments on the proposed rulemaking from the public, the Independent Regulatory Review Commission, members of the General Assembly or the House and Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committees.

## *G. Benefits, Costs and Compliance*

### *Benefits*

This final-form rulemaking aims to provide convenient and affordable access to waste disposal and recycling services in rural areas of this Commonwealth where trash collection and recycling services are not economically feasible to establish and therefore, are currently unavailable to many rural communities. By establishing rural transfer stations where all members of the community can drop off their waste and recycling to be transferred to a permitted disposal or processing facility, rural Pennsylvanians will benefit from gaining access to disposal and recycling options and being able to responsibly dispose of their waste.

Accordingly, this final-form rulemaking will help to alleviate the mismanagement of residential municipal waste and associated burning or illegal dumping of waste that currently exists in the more rural areas of this Commonwealth. This rulemaking provides a mechanism for municipalities to strategically locate a facility in areas that are most convenient for residents and/or where open burning and illegal dumping are an issue. Making responsible waste disposal and recycling options conveniently available in the community at little or no cost will meet the need of those currently paying significantly more to properly dispose of waste and manage recyclables. It will also provide an incentive to recycle and begin properly disposing of waste for those currently mismanaging these materials due to lack of convenience and prohibitive costs. This will improve protection of public health and the environment by preventing air and land pollution through an anticipated decrease in the instances of burning and illegal dumping of municipal waste and recyclables. It will also help to alleviate the costs State and local governments incur to clean up illegal dump sites and reduce the enforcement costs the Department currently incurs to respond to burning and illegal dumping complaints. Furthermore, once implemented, this final-form rulemaking will also allow for the capture of more recyclables, positively contributing to this Commonwealth's recycling marketplace and the 66,000 jobs it creates.

Public or private entities who decide to operate a rural transfer facility under the authorization of this final-form rulemaking will also realize benefits. By using the permit-by-rule format for this final-form rulemaking, the application requirements are simplified, compared to the requirements associated with other types of permitted facilities, by replacing voluminous application materials with more general operational plans and notification documents. A permit-by-rule provides persons or municipalities in rural areas more flexibility and allows them to obtain the authorization necessary to operate a rural transfer facility at a lower permitting cost, while providing necessary and adequate environmental controls to ensure that public health and the environment are protected.

### *Compliance costs*

This final-form rulemaking does not mandate that any public or private entity operate a rural transfer facility. Therefore, no compliance costs are required as part of this final-form rulemaking.



### *Compliance assistance plan*

The Department will continue to work with the regulated community to ensure this final-form rulemaking is understood. Department staff will provide compliance assistance during routine facility permitting and inspection activities.

### *Paperwork requirements*

Rural Transfer Facility operators are required in this final-form rulemaking to maintain records of pick-up dates for all containers for a period of 5 years. Records may be kept in a hard copy format or electronically. The permit-by-rule allows for significantly less paperwork than if a facility were required to apply for and obtain a general or individual permit.

### *H. Pollution Prevention*

By providing convenient and affordable access to waste disposal and recycling services in rural areas of this Commonwealth, this final-form rulemaking will help to alleviate the mismanagement of residential municipal waste and associated burning or illegal dumping of waste. By decreasing the instances of burning and illegal dumping of municipal waste and recyclables, the regulation will thereby improve public health and the environment by preventing air and land pollution.

Development of this final-form rulemaking also provides the Department with the opportunity to further educate the public about proper management of waste and recyclables and the environmental and economic benefits of proper management.

### *I. Sunset Review*

The Board is not establishing a sunset date for this final-form rulemaking, because it is needed for the Department to carry out its statutory authority. The Department will continue to closely monitor these regulations for their effectiveness and recommend updates to the Board as necessary.

### *J. Regulatory Review*

Under section 5(a) of the Regulatory Review Act (71 P.S. § 745.5(a)), on January 4, 2022, the Department submitted a copy of the notice of proposed rulemaking, published at 52 Pa.B. 363 (January 15, 2022), and a copy of a Regulatory Analysis Form to the Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC) and the Chairpersons of the House and Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committees for review and comment.

Under section 5(c) of the Regulatory Review Act, IRRC and the Committees were provided with copies of the comments received during the public comment period, as well as other documents when requested. In preparing this final-form rulemaking, the Department has considered all comments from IRRC, the House and Senate Committees and the public.

Under section 5.1(j.2) of the Regulatory Review Act, on  (blank) , this final-form rulemaking was deemed approved by the House and Senate Committees. Under section 5.1(e) of

the Regulatory Review Act, IRRC met on \_\_\_\_\_ (blank) \_\_\_\_\_ and approved the final-form rulemaking.

*K. Findings of the Board*

The Board finds that:

(1) Public notice of proposed rulemaking was given under sections 201 and 202 of the act of July 31, 1968 (P.L. 769, No. 240) (45 P.S. §§ 1201 and 1202) ), referred to as the Commonwealth Documents Law, and regulations promulgated thereunder at 1 Pa. Code §§ 7.1 and 7.2 (relating to notice of proposed rulemaking required; and adoption of regulations).

(2) A public comment period was provided as required by law, and all comments were considered.

(3) This final-form rulemaking does not enlarge the purpose of the proposed rulemaking published at 52 Pa.B. 363.

(4) These regulations are necessary and appropriate for administration and enforcement of the authorizing acts identified in section C of this order.

*L. Order of the Board*

The Board, acting under the authorizing statutes, orders that:

(a) The regulations of the Department, 25 Pa. Code Chapters 271 and 279, are amended to read as set forth in Annex A.

(b) The Chairperson of the Board shall submit this final-form regulation to the Office of General Counsel and the Office of Attorney General for review and approval as to legality and form, as required by law.

(c) The Chairperson of the Board shall submit this final-form regulation to the IRRC and the Senate and House Environmental Resources and Energy Committees as required by the Regulatory Review Act.

(d) The Chairperson of the Board shall certify this final-form regulation and deposit it with the Legislative Reference Bureau, as required by law.

(e) This final-form regulation shall take effect immediately upon publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

RAMEZ ZIADEH, P.E.,  
Acting Chairperson