



Food waste processing via anaerobic/aerobic digestion

A guide to disposing of food waste as commercial trade wastewater

Overview

What

This guide helps you understand your responsibilities when using a food waste technology product prior to discharging to our wastewater network. The food waste technology products considered by this guide are any devices processing food waste through an anaerobic or aerobic digestion process.

Who

This guide is for owners and operators of retail food businesses that meet the definition of retail food premises as outlined on our website and are considering using a food waste technology product with anaerobic or aerobic digestion. The types of businesses include restaurants, takeaway food outlets, function centres, hospital and nursing home kitchens, small caterers, retail butchers, delicatessens, and retail bakeries.

Product suppliers may also utilise this guide to learn more about Sydney Water's requirements relating to food waste technology products.

This document is **not** intended to be used by other commercial trade wastewater customers (other than retail food customers).

Why

This guide explains the requirements you must meet under our [Customer Contract](#), [Connecting to Sydney Water Systems policy](#) and our [Responsibilities of connected customers policy](#), when using a food waste technology product to handle food waste from your retail food business.

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Introduction

Food waste processing technologies refer to various methods and techniques used to manage the disposal of food waste. For retail food businesses, some on-site food waste technologies can include equipment such as aerobic or anaerobic digestors, dehydrators and macerators.

You must apply through Sydney Water Tap In® for approval to install any food waste technology product that requires a connection to our wastewater network. If you have an existing Connection Agreement, you must reapply so that your existing approval can be varied, or you may be breaching your agreement.

When you apply, we’ll review your proposed technology, consider its specifications and any other additional information needed to allow us to assess whether the technology is acceptable. As part of this assessment, we may need to assess whether using the technology will affect your ability to continue to meet our trade waste acceptance standards. At our discretion, we will decide whether we permit the connection of the equipment to our wastewater network.

If approved, we’ll advise you of the specific pre-treatment requirements that must be met prior to disposing wastewater from a food waste technology product to our wastewater network.

Sydney Water does not endorse or otherwise encourage the use of any particular food waste technology product or the activity of any company that supplies or manufactures these products.

What technologies are available?

There are a range of food waste technology products in the market. These primarily include food waste digesters, dehydrators and macerators. Not all food waste technology products discharge to the wastewater system. Some require collection of the waste on-site for further processing at beneficial use facilities, such as composters and energy generators.

This guide only considers food waste digesters that process waste via anaerobic or aerobic digestion and discharge to our wastewater network. We don’t allow macerators (e.g. in sink food waste disposal units or garbage grinders) to discharge to our wastewater network.

We don’t suggest or represent in any way, that any of the suppliers’ or manufacturers’ claims and/or benefits of their food waste technology are correct or incorrect. These claims may include:

- environmental benefits
- energy savings
- suitability for the customer’s purpose.

What are Sydney Water’s requirements?

If you choose to use one of these products, you must have our approval prior to installing the product and discharging food waste to the wastewater network.

Our default position is that we don’t allow commercial food waste technology products to be connected directly to our wastewater network. We will consider permitting you to connect to the wastewater network if the proposed product processes the waste through an anaerobic or aerobic digestion process. The product must also comply with the general conditions of a commercial trade waste agreement and the conditions below.

Process for seeking approval to use a food waste technology product

1. Visit [Sydney Water Tap In®](#) and select ‘Discharge trade waste approval’ if you are creating a new or changing an existing agreement.
2. One of our staff will contact you to discuss the application and obtain any further required information

Other requirements to be met

For food waste digestors with a processing capacity of **up to 1000kg/day**, you’ll be required to:

- Install and maintain an appropriately sized, dedicated grease arrestor from the [pre-treatment listing](#) available on the Sydney Water website. This grease arrestor must be installed on a dedicated trade waste discharge line.
- Note:** Minimum sizing for pre-treatment required for on-site food waste technology products are provided in Table 1 below.
- You must have an authorised grease trap cleaning contractor pump out the grease arrestor on a four-weekly pump out cycle to maintain the performance of the system.
 - All systems require inline and automated pH control units to ensure any discharge to our wastewater network is within the acceptance criteria values of 7-10 units.
 - Ensure that discharge from any pre-treatment devices connected to our wastewater system meets our trade waste acceptance standards.
 - Ensure the property meets our backflow prevention containment requirements.

For food waste digestors with a processing capacity of **greater than 1000kg/day**, you’ll be required to apply for a *Consent to discharge industrial trade wastewater*. This type of approval attracts additional obligations including regular discharge sampling for billing and compliance purposes.

We reserve the right to review pre-treatment requirements, type, sizing and maintenance frequency requirements at any point.

Table 1- minimum pre-treatment requirements

Processing capacity of food processing product	Pre-treatment size
Up to 250kg/day	1,000 litres
251 – 500 kg/day	1,500 litres
501 – 1000 kg day	2,000 litres
>1000 kg/day	Managed under a <i>Consent to discharge industrial trade wastewater</i>

If you do not get our approval and/or meet the conditions of that approval, you may face:

- increased trade waste charges
- suspension of your customer connection agreement
- issue of a non-compliance notice, fines, or prosecution
- restriction or disconnection of your water or wastewater connection.

Sydney Water is constantly assessing any potential impacts of different inputs on our wastewater network. We may review the pre-treatment requirements for food waste technology products and therefore this document is subject to change.

You can find a list of our general requirements in our [Customer Contract](#), [Connecting to Sydney Water Systems policy](#), and our [Responsibilities of connected customers policy](#).

How much will this cost?

All customers with an approved trade wastewater agreement are liable for management fees and waste quality charges that cover our additional costs in managing and treating your trade wastewater. All of Sydney Water's trade waste pricing is approved by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) as part of our pricing determinations and are published on the [Fees](#) page of our website annually.

Customers will also have charges outside of Sydney Water, including:

- those from the supplier of your machine
- purchase and installation of a dedicated pre-treatment device
- cleaning, collecting, transporting and disposing of grease arrestor waste.

If you fail to adequately maintain your pre-treatment device, or we determine that your waste is of poor quality, you may pay a higher wastewater quality charge as outlined in our charges factsheet [here](#).

We encourage all customers to consider the total cost of any food waste technology solution before applying to Sydney Water.

Definitions used in this document

Term	Definition
Connection agreement	The connection agreement applies to services that are not covered by the Sydney Water Customer Contract. The services under a connection agreement are generally additional to, and more complex than, the basic services covered by the Customer Contract.
Customer Contract	Contract between Sydney Water and the customer, referred to in section 55 of the Sydney Water Act. You do not need to sign this contract for it to be valid, legally binding and enforceable.
Commercial trade wastewater permission	The written approval from Sydney Water to a commercial customer outlining the types of waste that are acceptable and the requirements that must be met, for the customer to discharge trade wastewater from their commercial property into the wastewater network. This is issued within a connection agreement.
Food waste	Food waste or food material from manufacture, preparation, sale, or consumption of food.

Food waste processing via anaerobic/aerobic digestion

Food waste digester	The use of mechanical agitation, heat, and microbes to breakdown food waste into simpler organic structures.
Food waste dehydrator	The use of heat to remove water from food waste.
Food waste macerator	Macerators are grinders that reduce the volume of food waste by turning solid food waste into pulp.
Pre-treatment device	A device that is designed to remove or reduce pollutants and contaminants from wastewater, prior to it entering the wastewater network. A list of approved pre-treatment devices for commercial trade wastewater can be found on the Sydney Water website.
Food waste technology product	Food waste technology that processes food waste and includes food macerators, dehydrators and digesters or any other technology or product designed and manufactured to process food waste.
Responsibilities of connected customers policy	A policy that describes the responsibilities of our customers who are connected to our services.
Connecting to Sydney Water Systems policy	A policy that defines the services we offer when customers are required to seek permission to connect to network and the requirements for connecting.
Retail food customers	As defined on the Sydney Water website. Types of businesses include restaurants, takeaway food outlets, function centres, hospital and nursing home kitchens, small caterers, retail butchers, delicatessens and retail bakeries.
Sydney Water Tap In®	Sydney Water's online portal for making applications, submitting drawings and receiving approvals.