



COMPOSTING PROGRAM DIVERTS FOOD SCRAPS AND PAPER TOWELS FROM LANDFILL

During FY 2018, Argonne launched a composting program in 10 buildings across the Laboratory after a multiyear planning process.

In basic terms, composting is a natural process of recycling organic matter into a material that improves our soil. Compost is the humus-like product (solid) of the process of composting waste, which gardeners use as a fertilizer and fondly refer to as “black gold.” Compost also improves soil structure, allowing it to hold the correct amount of moisture, air, and nutrients.

In 2015, Argonne completed a waste characterization of the municipal solid waste stream and found that over 40% of the material was compostable. A composting implementation plan was developed in 2017. In FY 2018, Argonne implemented the plan’s recommendation to divert food scraps and paper towels to an offsite commercial composting facility.

Argonne is implementing the composting program in two phases. During FY 2018, food scrap collection began in the food service facilities and paper towel collection began in 10 buildings. In the second phase, planned for FY 2019, paper towel collection will expand to another 10 buildings across the Laboratory.

By adding composting to the Laboratory’s municipal solid waste diversion program, Argonne expects to increase waste diversion by 24% and increase the laboratory’s total diversion rate to around 68%.



Cross-divisional team discusses progress and next steps for the composting program. Left to right: Kevin Crosson (PMO), June Saragossa (FAC), Catherine Hurley (PMO), and Tony Sendra (FAC)

SUCCESS STORY: WASTE MANAGEMENT

Food scraps are collected with the help of Argonne's food service partner, Sodexo, which collects food scraps at the 213 Cafeteria tray return area and during food preparation at the 213 Cafeteria, 401 Grill, and 460 Guest House. Paper towels are being collected with the help of Argonne's Custodial staff, who have replaced regular trash bags with green, compostable bags certified by the Biodegradable Products Institute. The food scraps and paper towels are transported by Republic Industries to a commercial composting facility located 8 miles from Argonne in DuPage County.

The composting program was launched on July 16, 2018, and material is collected at the Laboratory twice per week. By the end of the fiscal year, 10.7 tons of organic material had been collected for composting.

Argonne also launched a Composting Ambassador Program to provide an opportunity for employee volunteers to help with the rollout and employee education about the composting program. After completing a 1-hour training session, Composting Ambassadors shared information about the composting program their colleagues and served as greeters at the 213 Cafeteria tray return area.

Argonne has a long tradition of environmental stewardship and sustainability. The composting program complements the Laboratory's existing all-in-one recycling program and specialty recycling programs for batteries, lightbulbs, scrap metal, and used oil. The Laboratory takes pride in being part of these sustainability solutions, and the composting program is a new opportunity for employees and visitors to make the campus more sustainable.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
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