

The Florida Agricultural Handbook of Solid and Hazardous Waste Regulation: State Regulation¹

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Legal overview

State law is similar to federal law. It consists of the same two parts: statutes and the administrative rules (also referred to as administrative regulations). In addition to federal regulations, the management of solid and hazardous waste is also regulated under state law, including

- mechanical wastes associated with the maintenance of machinery, equipment, and boats;
- chemical wastes, particularly pesticides, and common household chemical and hazardous wastes;
- underground storage tanks;
- biological wastes, primarily the disposal of animal carcasses and by-products;

- composting;
- residuals (sludge), including the restrictions on application to agricultural land;
- on-site sewage disposal.

Does federal law or state law take precedence?

If there is federal law on an issue, that law sets a minimum standard that always applies. State law may be stricter than federal law. Local governments may have even stricter rules than the state. In a few cases, the state may decide not to allow local governments to be stricter by passing a statute that explicitly prevents the local governments from making and enforcing regulations which are stricter than those of the state.

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How are state government actions restricted?

To be sure that agencies deal fairly with you, Florida has passed laws that restrict the power of the state government. Three of these laws are

1. The Florida Administrative Procedure Act;
2. The Florida Sunshine Law;
3. The Florida Public Records Law.

How do I tell my side of the story?

The Florida Administrative Procedure Act (Chapter 120, Florida Statutes) establishes your procedural rights:

- the right to be heard by the agency
- the right to receive notice of agency actions and meetings
- the right to challenge an administrative rules validity if substantially affected by agency actions
- a guaranteed opportunity for those who are most affected by agency actions to use those rights

This statute allows you to have input into agency actions and rulemaking.

How do I find out what happens at agency meetings?

The Florida Sunshine Law (Chapter 286, Florida Statutes) declares that all meetings of any governmental body taking official action must be open to the public and the minutes must be recorded. Additionally, the public records must be made available. While this statute is not a guarantee of unconditional access to the government, it goes a long way toward keeping administrative bodies accountable to you.

How do I find out what has happened in the past?

The Florida Public Records Law (Chapter 119, Florida Statutes) provides that all agency records, with a few exceptions, are available for you to inspect and copy. The exceptions apply when confidential information is necessary for an efficient government or when disclosing the information would have a negative effect on law enforcement.