



Chapter 246-500 WAC – Handling of Human Remains Frequently Asked Questions

The following provides guidance to assist facilities to implement rules for the handling of human remains as required in Chapter 246-500 WAC, as amended by WSR-21-01-039. You can access the rule language on the [Washington state legislature website](#).

Can an alkaline hydrolysis reduction facility use a purpose built vessel that does not reach a minimum temperature of 250 degrees Fahrenheit during the reduction process?

- Yes, if certain criteria are met. WAC 246-500-053(2) establishes two options for alkaline hydrolysis facilities to use.
- Facilities may operate a high-temperature purpose built vessel that reaches a minimum of 250 degrees Fahrenheit for at least thirty minutes during the reduction process.
- Alternatively, facilities may choose to operate a purpose built vessel that runs at lower temperatures only if validation testing conducted by a third-party (i.e., an independent laboratory, not the vessel manufacturer or reduction facility) shows the process destroys prions and sterilizes both the water and airspace. Validation testing conducted by a third-party, can be initiated by the vessel manufacturer or an alkaline hydrolysis reduction facility. The appropriate testing criteria for Option B must include a matrix-assisted laser desorption/ionization time of flight (MALDI-TOF) mass spectrometry peptide sizing analysis and a 6 spore log reduction or greater in the level of Bacillus spores.

How do alkaline hydrolysis reduction facilities document that vessels meet the requirements under WAC 246-500-053(2)(b)?

- WAC 246-500-053(2)(b) requires facilities using purpose built hydrolysis vessels that run at temperatures lower than 250 degrees Fahrenheit to retain documentation of successful validation testing on-site. If a third-party validation study has already been conducted for the vessel model an operator intends to use, the operator should obtain a copy of the validation study results as documentation from the entity that conducted the validation test. The operator must keep validation testing documentation on-site and be available to public health officials. If a third-party validation study has not been completed, the operator has the option to pursue validation independently or in conjunction with the manufacturer.

Can a natural organic reduction facility utilize in-house testing to meet the requirements under WAC 246-500-055(2)?

- No. WAC 246-500-055(2)(c) requires a natural organic reduction facility to use an independent laboratory to conduct the required testing. This means that an outside laboratory, not affiliated with the facility must be used. In-house testing would not meet the requirements under this section. The Board encourages facilities to continue testing following the completion of the required testing. There are no requirements for who must conduct additional testing, beyond the testing required in WAC 246-500-055(2)(c)(i), (ii), and (iii)

How do natural organic reduction facilities document testing conducted under WAC 246-500-055(2)?

- WAC 246-500-055(2)(e) requires facilities to compile an annual report that includes, among other things, the results of any laboratory analyses of human remain. Facilities should compile the information in a readable and easily understood format that clearly identifies the required information. It is recommended that testing results for required parameters outlined in WAC 246-500-055(2)(f) be presented in a table format closely resembling the table in the rule, with an additional column for testing results. Local health jurisdictions may request that facilities provide the information in a specific manner.

How should natural organic reduction facilities identify if remains are not suitable for natural organic reduction under WAC 246-500-030(3) due to disease or radioactivity?

- Individuals and facilities handling human remains must ensure they, upon transfer or acceptance of remains, are aware of any potential for disease spread. Natural organic reduction facility operators must acquire the appropriate information from the deceased's family, the medical examiner, or other individual or entity to determine if natural organic reduction is an allowable activity. If remains require the removal of an implanted device, WAC 308-47-035(6) requires the removal to be completed by a licensed embalmer or embalmer intern. This typically occurs prior to transfer of the remains to the reduction facility.

What are the sampling methods described in the U.S. Composting Council 2002 Test Methods for the Examination of Composting and Compost, Method 02.01-A through E?

- The U.S. Compost Council has published these compost methods in their publication Test Methods for the Examination of Composting and Compost (TECC) which is available on their website and other online resources. Facilities are encouraged to coordinate and discuss their sampling methods with their selected independent testing laboratory for continuity across testing results.