



## Waste Energy

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Waste energy is generated from waste-to-energy plants, which burn solid waste at extremely high temperatures to produce electricity. The Massachusetts [Renewable Portfolio Standard](#) (RPS) relegates waste energy to Class II, in a separate category from Class II renewables. The RPS obligation for Class II Waste Energy is currently set at 3.5% of total electricity in Massachusetts. Plants must meet MA Department of Environmental Protection regulations in order to qualify to produce RPS Class II Waste Energy certificates (WECs). 50% of revenue generated from the sales of WECs is channeled into local recycling programs. In 2010, qualifying waste energy units in Massachusetts generated 284 MWs of electricity.

Although appealing as a way to reduce waste volumes and produce alternative energy, the arguments against waste energy are similar to those surrounding landfill gas energy: trace elements and compounds can be released into the air as a result of combustion, where they may form compounds that are harmful to human health and the environment. Communities may prefer to engage in waste reduction and segregation practices rather than investing in a waste-to-energy plant.