

# Assessing The Risk Of Waste

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It can be difficult for facility managers to be aware of and accurately understand what is going on across all restaurant locations, especially when elements like waste appear to be out of their control. Their role requires planning for and managing any potential threats to a smooth operation of all restaurant locations.

Risk assessment allows restaurant facility managers to predict issues and prioritize needs to ensure that problems don't disrupt their everyday performance. This involves thinking about everything within the restaurant chain's operations that could impact the way staff works and customer experience.

How data-driven insights from waste technology can uncover operational inefficiencies

## Traditional Risk Assessment

From equipment failure and refrigeration system control to food-quality standards and waste management, all of these potential risks should be monitored, evaluated and tracked. Continuous analysis and measurement against key performance indicators offer the ability to monitor the status of important factors that affect business operations.

Preventative maintenance is also critical to proactively addressing issues before they negatively impact the guest experience. Most restaurants use preventative maintenance programs on key systems such as kitchen, refrigeration and HVAC equipment. Technology can help provide facility managers with visibility and control into equipment performance, and analysis of the data can predict potential leaks and failures. Preventative maintenance, paired with these insights, allow restaurants to address issues before they impact operations, and most importantly, before guests are aware of a problem.

But, what about waste? While some restaurants include waste in their risk assessment and preventive maintenance, many don't. On the surface, it may not seem like waste is something that the restaurant chain cannot control, but it can. And waste technology can help.

## Strategically Managing Waste

Any restaurant chain that has ever experienced a waste issue likely does not want to go through it again. Waste issues are inherently messy. When a waste problem occurs, especially in restaurants, it is often an emergency that needs to be addressed as quickly as possible, and can have a huge impact on the brand's image, especially if the issue is visible to customers.

Waste management is likely only a small percentage of a restaurant chain's operations budget. While it may seem like a low-priority item when compared to all the other responsibilities that a restaurant facility manager has to grapple with, it shouldn't be. In fact, waste is a good indicator of overall business health.

Waste management technology provides transparency into facilities' waste generation. By monitoring waste at all locations across a restaurant chain, facility managers can better predict their waste management needs, and more importantly, make data-driven decisions that can improve their operations.

Based on data, waste management services can identify the true driver of waste volume and uncover operational inefficiencies that are important to address. Waste technology can have an impact beyond the dumpster. For example, it may seem logical that the number of meals served would indicate the volume of waste produced. Yet, that correlation often does not add up. What if the number of meals decreases but your trash volume stays the same, or even increases?

We need to shift from relying on common operational metrics and making decisions based on assumptions to using actionable insights from real data collected from everyday operations.

### Expanding the Idea of Risk Assessment

Restaurant facility management is concerned with three main priorities that dictate their day-to-day decision making: health and safety, customer experience and operational performance. Think about the risk assessment involved with each of these areas:

**Health and safety:** Food quality and safety are becoming increasingly important, not only in the eyes of customers but also when it comes to regulations. A clean, safe environment is necessary to prepare, cook and serve food. The health and safety of a restaurant's customers and employees often tops the list of priorities among facility management as so many potential risks can affect that part of its operations. And if a restaurant overlooks waste service as a priority, the consequences could include hazards to its employees, health violations and fines.

**Customer experience:** From food quality to room temperature and airflow, facility managers need to ensure that every element of the customer experience is addressed. When assessing the risks that can impact a guest's experience and the maintenance needed to ensure that it is not disrupted, effective waste management in the back of the house should be considered.

**Operational performance:** Restaurant facilities are designed for optimal operational efficiency—from how the cooking equipment is organized in the kitchen to the dining room layout. Continuous monitoring, evaluating and reporting provides insights around the potential risks to efficient operations and can identify maintenance needs. To do this effectively, you need accurate, reliable data across operations—from equipment performance to waste management.

Does your risk assessment program cover all of these areas? Do you have access to everything you need across all sites to ensure optimal operations? If the answer is yes, great. But if there is any doubt, consider evaluating whether your control over your restaurant facilities' waste aligns with the control you have across the other areas of your operations.

In the waste industry, about 9 percent of scheduled waste collections are missed. If facility professionals are not using waste management technology, missed collections may go unnoticed — until it becomes a visible problem to employees or, worse, to customers.

Another common waste management solution for restaurants addresses the need to correctly size their containers, ensuring that waste collection costs align with actual needs. This can lead to operational efficiencies and cost savings. About 30 percent of restaurants require waste schedule adjustments.

Restaurant facility management professionals can help control their waste by taking steps to prevent overflows, ensure waste services are aligned with the chain's needs, monitor whether waste haulers are adhering to their schedules and proactively identify missed pickups. Waste services should offer valuable insights and strategic recommendations for operational improvements that are data-driven and align with the everyday priorities of restaurant facilities.

Geoff Aardsma, Vice President of Client Service at Enevo, works to optimize waste-collection systems and empower waste generators to reduce their environmental impact. Previously, Aardsma spent more than eight years at a major North American waste management firm, where he was integral to the successful launch and growth of several initiatives, including construction debris recycling programs and innovative commercial and industrial sustainability programs. A diverse background in several aspects of solid waste management gives Aardsma a balanced perspective on the challenges facing the industry today.