

County of Santa Cruz

CURBSIDER

DECEMBER 2011

County Bans

Plastic Bags

1

PAGE

Compostable

Plastic

2

PAGE

Disposal Site

News

3

PAGE

New Guide

Curbside Recycling

3

PAGE

Hazardous

Materials

4

PAGE

Paint

4

PAGE

Resources

BACK

PAGE



County Bans Plastic Bags

Page 1



County Bans Plastic Bags



The County of Santa Cruz has joined cities and counties around the state to limit single-use bags at businesses in the unincorporated county. Concerned about pollution, litter and the impact of plastic bags on wildlife, the County Board of Supervisors voted on September 20 to adopt the new ordinance.

Beginning March 20, 2012, businesses in the unincorporated county can no longer provide single-use plastic bags to their customers at checkout. Stores can provide paper bags, but they must charge customers ten cents per bag. Stores keep this money to offset their costs. Receipts must indicate number of bags provided and the price paid, and stores are required to keep records of their bag use to help assess the effectiveness of the new law. Bags used within stores for items such as vegetables, meat, baked goods or bulk items are exempt. The ordinance does not affect plastic bags offered for sale, such as trash can liners or food storage bags.

Restaurants or other food service businesses are also prohibited from providing plastic bags for food to go, but they can provide paper bags without charging a fee. If customers bring their own bags, food service providers should take reasonable precautions to protect public health. One option might be to ask customers to pack their own food.

The cities of Watsonville, Capitola, Scotts Valley and Santa Cruz are all considering similar ordinances.

The full text of the new ordinance is available online at www.santacruzcountyrecycles.org.

For more information about the bag ordinance or to order a sign, contact Tim Goncharoff, Department of Public Works, (831) 454-2160 or Tim.Goncharoff@co.santa-cruz.ca.us.

Free Signs For Businesses

These durable attractive signs are available for County shopping centers to help their customers remember their reusable bags.

Signs are 12"x18", on durable painted steel, and perforated for easy mounting. Signs are available at no cost, but supplies are limited.



Compostable Plastic



When I bury a used paper plate or a take-out clamshell made out of 100% paper (no plastic lining) or bagasse (sugar cane fiber) in my backyard compost bin, it rots so fast it is indistinguishable in the dark loam in a matter of weeks. In contrast, a clear plastic clamshell labeled “compostable” will show no noticeable change after sitting in my compost bin for a year's time.

My little backyard bin is great for leaves, grass, paper, and fruit and vegetable kitchen scraps, but it can't handle meat, bones and other animal products. A more robust operation that reaches high temperatures in a managed environment is capable of composting all manner of organic materials.

Definitions

The term “compostable” means the ability to completely break down by natural decay into soil elements in a reasonable period of time without leaving any harmful residue. The recognized standard for compostability assumes processing in a large-scale industrial composting facility that reaches high temperatures not possible in a backyard bin. This standard applies to compostable plastics.

“Biodegradable,” on the other hand, is a meaningless term which can describe a petroleum-based plastic with a small amount of corn-based additive that can decompose, resulting in progressively smaller particles of petro-plastic pollution that mimic food for scavenger species.

Bioplastics are a class of plastics derived from renewable plant sources such as vegetable oil or starch rather than fossil-fuel resources. Some new bioplastic resins are chemically indistinguishable from commonly recycled plastics. Two examples made from sugarcane that can be put in your blue recycling cart are Dasani's “plant bottle”, which is recycled like PETE #1 soda bottles, and Odwalla's “plant bottle”, which recycles along with HDPE #2 milk jugs. Other bioplastics are designed to degrade, for such uses as compostable take-out clamshells.

Be wary of “green” claims unless they are backed up by standards. Some manufacturers claim their plastic product could, at the same time, be recyclable and compostable. Since recycling returns

resources to factories, the last thing a production manager wants in the feedstock for making a new durable product is a contaminant that will easily decompose in the environment.

Environmental Packaging Laws

Besides banning Styrofoam, the County's Environmentally Acceptable Packaging Materials Ordinance (County Code 5.46) adopted in 2008 requires that single-use cups, plates, bowls, utensils and take-out containers used by food service establishments be recyclable or compostable. “Recyclable” is defined as being acceptable in local collection programs, such as easily-recycled PETE #1 plastic, commonly used for cups and take-out trays. “Compostable” items must meet specific standards.

A Compostable Standard

The Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) independently tests and certifies food service products that actually do break down completely into soil element in a reasonable amount of time in a large-scale compost operation. Certified products that meet the County standard are identified by the BPI logo or can be found on the organization's website at: www.bpiworld.org. These products are now widely available at local restaurant supply houses.

Food Scrap Composting Program

Santa Cruz County established a limited food waste collection program in 2005 which now serves 40 restaurants, 7 markets, 5

elementary schools, and several larger institutions in the mid-county area. When single-use food service ware is employed, these facilities can use certified compostable products because their collection system will properly process the discards into high quality compost for agricultural applications. Details on the food scrap program are available at www.compostsantacruzcounty.org.

However, the County's drop-off and curbside yardwaste collection does not accept any food waste beyond raw fruits and vegetables. This program merely grinds organic matter to produce mulch products without the benefit of composting. All plastics, including compostable plastic bags and containers, are prohibited from the yardwaste program.

Which Bin?

If you end up with a plastic-like take-out container at home that is marked biodegradable or even compostable, consider this: You can't put it in the blue recycling cart because degradable plastics will compromise new durable products. You can't put it in the green cart because the yardwaste is chipped for mulch and not composted. You can't put it in your backyard compost pile because it will not degrade under those conditions. You can reuse it over and over again. But to get rid of it, you have to put it in your garbage can.

What a sad end for a product that was purchased in the hopes of helping the planet. Next time consider not bringing it home.

Disposal Site News

Sunday Closure

The Buena Vista Landfill & Ben Lomond Transfer Station are now closed on Sundays. These County disposal sites are open Monday through Saturday from 7:30a.m. to 3:30p.m. The closure to save money began July 1, 2011.

New HHW Schedule at Ben Lomond

The Household Hazardous Waste Facility located at the Ben Lomond Transfer Station is now open on Thursdays only, from 7:30a.m. to 3:30p.m. Reduced days of operation are a result of the Sunday closure.

No Christmas Tree Flocking

A flocked tree or one covered with tinsel strands will not be accepted for recycling. Trees picked up after the holidays at curbside or from drop-off locations are all processed at the Buena Vista Landfill and chipped for a mulch product that cannot contain unsightly contaminants. Please decorate only with removable tinsel and ornaments. Also remove metal and plastic stands before recycling.

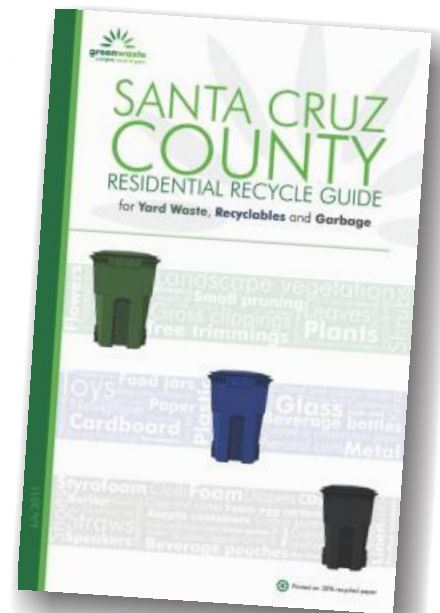
Recycled Aggregate Available

Crushed recycled concrete aggregate is available at the Buena Vista Landfill for only \$8 a ton. Schedule a pickup between 9:00a.m. and 3:30p.m. by calling 831-454-5153. We have plenty, and we'll load it.

For County of Santa Cruz disposal site hours, directions and rates, see www.santacruzcountyrecycles.org or call 831-454-2430.

New Curbside Recycling Guide More Now Recycled At Curbside

Window glass, hardback books, empty propane canisters, and plastic swimming pools are a few of the items added to the extensive list of acceptable items in GreenWaste Recovery's curbside recycling program. The complete list is featured in a new curbside service guide which may be viewed online at www.santacruzcountyrecycles.org. Click on Resources, then select Curbside Recycling Guidelines. Or you may call GreenWaste Customer Service at 800-665-2209 and request that a guide be mailed to you.



Hazardous Materials Require Special Handling

Toxic, corrosive and flammable items are prohibited from the garbage or landfill. If not managed properly when discarded, hazardous materials such as those listed below can threaten our environment.

Household Batteries - AA, AAA, C, D, 9V, button and rechargeable batteries are accepted at disposal site recycling centers. Individual customers of GreenWaste Recovery may seal household batteries in a clear plastic bag and leave it on top of their blue recycling cart for pickup.

Fluorescent Lamps - All types of tubes and compact fluorescent bulbs contain a minute but significant amount of mercury. These lamps are accepted for recycling at many retail hardware stores and at Household Hazardous Waste facilities. For locations see www.santacruzcountyrecycles.org or call 831-454-2160. Transport carefully to avoid breakage.

Drugs and Sharps - Prescription and over-the-counter medicines, as well as hypodermic needles and lancets, are accepted at many retail pharmacies, some medical facilities, and at Household Hazardous Waste facilities. For locations see www.sharpmedsolutions.org or call 831-454-2160. Sharps must be transported in an approved container.



Paint

Lots of homeowners paint regularly. Here are some waste reduction tips to keep in mind next time you plan to pick up a brush:

- Pick your color carefully. A color on the swatch can appear very different on the wall. Some paint stores sell sample colors in small jars so you can paint a test patch before committing to gallons.
- Buy the right amount. Paint quantity calculators are available on the Internet and at paint stores. You don't want to run out in the middle of the job, but you only need a little left over for touch-up.
- Purchase recycled-content paint when available. Several major brands now offer premium quality paints that incorporate leftover paint. The price is right and it supports reuse.
- Share extra paint rather than store it in the garage for years. Fresh paint is easier to use. Offer it to friends and neighbors or Habitat for Humanity. Or take leftovers to a Household Hazardous Waste Facility where it will be placed in the Second Chance Store for free giveaway.
- Recycle empty paint cans. Details in the sidebar.

Recycle Your Paint Cans

If you have a paint can that is completely empty and dry - except that the inside of the can is now a painted surface - the metal or plastic can and lid may be put in your blue recycling cart. The coat of paint is a minimal amount of contamination that can be tolerated in the recycling system.

Hardened paint in the bottom of a can is no longer chemically reactive, so it is allowed in the regular trash. If you are able to knock out the hardened paint "puck," toss it in the garbage and recycle the empty can.

If the can contains any liquid paint, then it is considered household hazardous waste and cannot be put in either the recycling or trash cart. You must take liquid paint to one of the four Household Hazardous Waste Facility sites around the county. Hazardous materials from private residences are accepted at no charge. Directions and hours of operations are online at www.santacruzcountyrecycles.org or by calling 831-454-2606.



County of Santa Cruz Public Works

701 Ocean Street, Room 410
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(831) 454-2160

Presort Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Complete Mailing
Service, Inc.



Printed on 55% recycled 30% post-consumer waste paper processed chlorine-free, using soy-based inks.

Recycling Resources

Recycle Information Line 831-454-2333

- What and where to recycle (recorded messages)

Curbside Refuse, Recycling and Yard Waste Collection . . 800-665-2209
(Operated by GreenWaste Recovery)

- Begin new service
 - Report missed recycling or trash service
 - Request delivery or removal of carts
 - Obtain oil recycling jugs
- www.greenwaste.com

County Public Works Dept. . . . 831-454-2160
www.santacruzcountyrecycles.org

- Apartments and business recycling inquiries
- Complaints, compliments or suggestions

Household Hazardous Waste . . 831-454-2606
(recorded messages)

- Schedule for free disposal
- Non-hazardous alternatives
- Free surplus paint

Composting Resources

www.compostsantacruzcounty.org

Buena Vista Landfill 831-454-5153

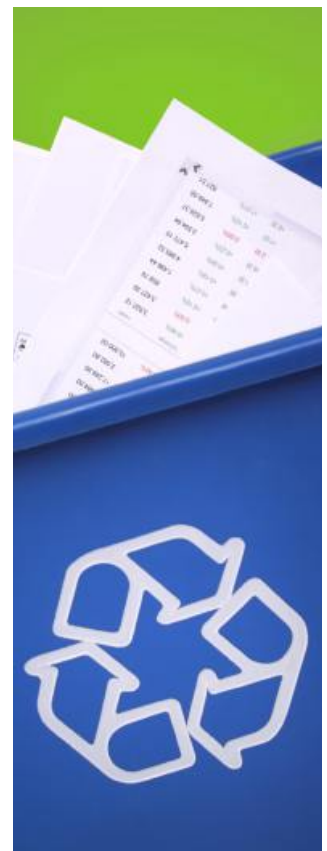
- Recorded information 831-454-2430
- Recycling Center 831-479-1055
(Operated by the California Grey Bears)

Ben Lomond Transfer Station. 831-336-3951

- Recorded information 831-454-2430
- Recycling Center 831-338-1728
(Operated by the Valley Women's Club)

City of Santa Cruz 831-420-6270

- **Resource Recovery Facility (landfill)**
- Open to unincorporated county residents in Davenport and Bonny Doon only



Para información en español sobre el reciclaje en las areas no incorporadas del condado de Santa Cruz, favor de llamar al (800) 665-2209.