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# Take it Back

What do you do if it doesn't fit? Wrong color? Doesn't work? Breaks while under warranty? Take it back, of course. Many stores have liberal return policies, with no questions asked. Although a company may take a loss on return items that are no longer salable, stores bend over backwards to keep you coming in their front door.

The Take-Back concept is expanding to include products when they are worn out or used up, at the end of their useful life. Examples of take-back opportunities for specific products are listed in the sidebar.

Take-back is not a new idea. There was the nickel deposit on soda bottles that were returned for refilling. Auto parts stores took your dead starter motor for rebuilding, and brake shoes for relining. The inherent value of those discards was recognized by industry.

Today a combination of budding environmental consciousness among some industry leaders and a growing body of law to mandate more sustainable practices is leading some manufacturers to take responsibility for their products at the end of life. Take-back laws often target hazardous materials, such as lead in electronics, cadmium in rechargeable batteries, and mercury in older thermostats.

Some businesses have been proactive in this area for a variety of reasons. In our area, Kragen (now O'Reilly) pioneered used motor oil take-back among auto parts stores. In this successful sales strategy, the headache of handling hazardous used oil was paid back by the loyalty of repeat customers who change their own oil. Today many chain auto parts stores take both oil and oil filters. These stores, along with public drop-off sites and curbside programs throughout the county, collected 64,000 gallons of used motor oil and 30,000 oil filters in the fiscal year ending June 2011.

In order to forestall regulation of their industry, manufacturers of small rechargeable batteries that use toxic heavy metals such as nickel, cadmium and chromium voluntarily founded and fund the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation, which provides free collection of these batteries.

Take advantage of take-back programs. Not only do they reduce the amount of product waste headed to the landfill, a far-reaching consequence is that when manufacturers get stuck with their old products, they begin to design products that are easier to recycle and contain less hazardous materials.



**Cell Phones:** The California Cell Phone Recycling Act of 2004 requires every retailer who sells cell phones to accept from the public at no charge used cell phones and accessories for reuse, recycling, or proper disposal. Fundraisers for schools and non-profits often include cell phone collection. The state estimates that in the year 2010, 21% of these wireless devices were properly recycled.

**Auto Batteries:** These heavy lead-acid batteries are commonly accepted at no charge by auto parts stores and repair shops, as well as disposal site recycling centers. Over 96% of auto batteries are recycled in a closed-loop life cycle under strict environmental regulations due to the acute toxicity of lead. The typical new lead-acid battery contains 60 to 80 percent recycled lead and plastic. Reclaiming valuable lead scrap is easier and cheaper than mining new ore.

**Paint:** The Architectural Paint Product Stewardship law was adopted in California in 2010. The paint industry has formed a stewardship organization to collect and process leftover paint. Beginning in 2013, a small surcharge will be added to the price of new paint, while free and convenient take-back of unused paint will be offered at selected retail stores. The work of Household Hazardous Waste collection sites in handling paint, currently funded by taxpayers, will be compensated by the paint industry.

**Household Batteries:** The California Rechargeable Battery Recycling Act of 2005 requires retailers of rechargeable household batteries to take them back from the public at no charge. While the quantity of these batteries recycled in the state nearly doubled in the first few years to 8 million pounds, this represents only 10% of rechargeable batteries sold. And rechargeable batteries amount to less than a tenth of all household batteries. All types of household batteries are banned from disposal. They can be dropped off at disposal site recycling centers. GreenWaste Recovery residential cart customers may place spent household batteries sealed in a clear plastic bag on top of their blue recycling cart for collection. Retail stores accepting rechargeable batteries can be found on the Internet at [call2recycle.org](http://call2recycle.org).

# Fluorescent Lamp Take Back

Fluorescent bulbs contain a small amount of mercury, which is a hazardous waste. It is illegal to throw out fluorescent tubes or compact fluorescent bulbs. Do not place them in your garbage or recycling cart. A special thanks to the businesses below that are helping our environment by accepting used fluorescent bulbs and tubes up to 4 feet in length (maximum 10 per day)

FOR FREE! Residential customers only. Businesses may recycle their used bulbs for a small fee at Household Hazardous Waste Facilities or may purchase mail-back recycling containers at ProBuild, Riverside Lighting or from Hope Services.

## ACE Hardware

72 Rancho del Mar Shopping Center, Aptos – 662-0222  
855 Almar Avenue, Santa Cruz – 426-7650  
1214 Soquel Avenue, Santa Cruz – 457-2222  
1984 Freedom Boulevard, Watsonville – 724-4740  
451 Main Street, Watsonville – 724-4749

## Felton Paint and Hardware

6291 Highway 9, Felton – 335-4838

## Illuminée

402 Ingalls Street, Suite 23, Santa Cruz – 423-1121

## Riverside Lighting

300 Soquel Avenue, Santa Cruz – 423-7411



## Orchard Supply Hardware

1601 41st Avenue, Capitola – 475-7701  
1060 S. Green Valley Road, Watsonville – 728-7701

## ProBuild

235 River Street, Santa Cruz – 426-1020  
2435 41st Avenue, Soquel – 475-6100

## Scarborough Lumber

9470 Highway 9, Ben Lomond – 336-5142  
12990 Highway 9, Boulder Creek – 338-6467  
20 El Pueblo Road, Scotts Valley – 438-0331  
218 Mt Hermon Road, Scotts Valley – 438-0581

For the most current list of locations call 454-2160 or visit:  
[www.santacruzcountyrecycles.org](http://www.santacruzcountyrecycles.org).

# Free E-Waste Collection Day - Everyday



No need to wait for that special collection day. Free drop-off opportunities are available almost every day of the year at these public, non-profit and private sites.

## California Grey Bears Recycling Center

2710 Chanticleer Avenue, Santa Cruz, open 7 days 8:00 AM-4:00 PM

## Hope Services

220 Lincoln Street, Santa Cruz, open Mon-Fri 8:00 AM-3:00 PM

## Buena Vista Landfill

1231 Buena Vista Drive, Watsonville, open Mon-Sat 7:30 AM-3:30 PM

## Ben Lomond Transfer Station

9835 Newell Creek Road, Ben Lomond, open Mon-Sat 7:30 AM-3:30 PM

## City of Santa Cruz Resource Recovery Facility

605 Dimeo Lane, Santa Cruz, open Mon-Sat 7:30 AM-3:30 PM

## Best Buy

2650 41st Avenue, Soquel, open Mon-Sat 10:00 AM-9:00 PM, Sun 10:00 AM-7:00 PM  
[www.bestbuy.com/recycling](http://www.bestbuy.com/recycling)

All types of electronic products are accepted for recycling including TVs, computers, monitors, printers and other peripherals, video and audio equipment, telephones, cell phones and handheld devices, cables and wiring.

Recycling of electronic products with a reputable company protects human health and the environment. Electronics can contain a number of toxic materials including lead, cadmium, mercury, hexavalent chromium, polyvinyl chloride, and brominated flame retardant. A new County ordinance will assure environmentally conscious electronics recycling when it takes effect in October.

# No Drugs Down The Drain!

Finally, a safe, free and environmentally responsible way to get rid of old household medicines and medical sharps. Be responsible. Be informed. Take it back.

- Old medicines can no longer be flushed down the drain. Take back prescription and over-the-counter medications; all are accepted except for controlled substances. Consolidate pills in a clear plastic bag for drop off at a take-back site. Leave liquids in original containers.
- It is illegal to discard used syringes or other sharps in the garbage or recycling. Used sharps must be transported to a take-back site in an approved sharps container, available for purchase at all participating take-back sites.

Many pharmacies and clinics are participating, as well as all the Household Hazardous Waste facilities. Over 30 free and convenient take-back sites are located throughout the County. Together they collected 440,000 needles and 11,500 pounds of medicines in 2011.

For locations, ask your doctor or pharmacist, call 454-2160 or visit [www.sharpsmedsolutions.org](http://www.sharpsmedsolutions.org).



# Shoppers Enthusiastic About County Bag Ban



**On seeing the mural Save Our Shores painted outside the Rancho Del Mar Safeway, Marsha Butcher of Aptos said she loved sea lions and was going to remember her bags to help save the sea creatures.**

Just one month after Santa Cruz County's new bag ordinance took effect, surveys at local shopping centers are indicating that the great majority of shoppers are already bringing their own bags. Comparison with a study before adoption suggests that the number of shoppers now arriving with reusable bags in hand or choosing to skip the bag altogether has skyrocketed.

“We are happy to see this ban is accomplishing exactly what we were hoping. About 80% of people are bringing reusable bags or using no bag at all. Just ten cents is all it takes to help people change behavior,” said Laura Kasa, Executive Director of Save Our Shores, a local environmental organization that has conducted effective community outreach and urged passage of the ban.

County Supervisor Mark Stone added “Our ordinance was shaped by a coalition of environmental groups, businesses, and county staff, and informed by lessons from cities and counties throughout California attempting to take action on single-use plastic carryout bags. By weaning ourselves of our infatuation with plastic bags, Santa Cruz County is one step closer to reaching its sustainability goals.” Supervisors adopted the bag ban in an effort to reduce the use of plastic bags, estimated at 50 million annually in the unincorporated county alone.

The County's ordinance, which took effect on March 20, prohibits stores in the unincorporated county from providing plastic bags at checkout. Stores that offer paper carryout bags are required to charge ten cents apiece, which they keep. Stores can still offer plastic bags in-store for produce and bulk items. Restaurants are exempt. Similar ordinances are being discussed by local cities. Santa Cruz County joins 45 cities and counties in California and dozens of countries around the globe that have adopted plastic bag bans.

# Styrofoam Ban Broadened

For several years the County of Santa Cruz and local cities have prohibited using expanded polystyrene (EPS) foam, known by the trade name Styrofoam, in local food service. In November 2011, the City of Capitola extended their ban to retail sales of similar products. The County followed in April 2012, and other cities may soon do the same.

While local restaurants no longer use EPS, products made of the material are still widely sold in local stores. Foam cups, plates, coolers and other products frequently end up on our beaches where they can blow into the ocean, becoming a health hazard for marine wildlife which mistake the particles for food. Laura Kasa of local non-profit Save Our Shores, which organizes regular volunteer beach cleanups, reports that the ban applying to restaurants significantly reduced the number of take-out containers found on the beach. She predicts the wider ban will further reduce the still-prevalent plastic foam trash that volunteers encounter.



The new ordinance will prohibit retail sales of products made of polystyrene foam in stores in the unincorporated areas of the county when it takes effect on October 17, 2012.

For more information about the new Styrofoam ordinance, contact the County Department of Public Works at (831) 454-2160 or visit [www.santacruzcountycycles.org](http://www.santacruzcountycycles.org).



## Recycling Gone Bad

Does the presence of that recycling bin inspire you to use more paper than you otherwise would, depleting natural resources in the process? “Consumers may view the ability to recycle a product as a 'get out of jail free card' that makes consumption more acceptable,” writes Jesse Catlin of Washington State University who, with Yitong Wang of Tsinghua University, Beijing, reported their study titled *Recycling Gone Bad: When The Option To Recycle Increases Resource Consumption* in the April 2012 issue of the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*.

Of course we are saved from this apparent paradox of recycling when we remember that Reduce and Reuse always come before Recycle.

**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](http://www.greenwaste.com)

**County Public Works Dept. . . . . 831-454-2160**

[www.santacruzcountyrecycles.org](http://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](http://www.compostsantacruzcounty.org)

**Buena Vista Landfill & Recycling Center . . . . . 831-454-5153**

- Recorded information . . . . . 831-454-2430

**Ben Lomond Transfer Station & Recycling Center . . . . . 831-336-3951**

- Recorded information . . . . . 831-454-2430

**City of Santa Cruz Resource Recovery Facility & Recycling Center . . . . . 831-420-6270**

- Open to unincorporated county residents in Davenport and Bonny Doon only

**California Grey Bears Recycling Centers . . 831-479-1055**

- Chanticleer Avenue
- Buena Vista Landfill

**SLV Redemption/Recycling Centers . . . . . 831-335-1728**

(Operated by the Valley Women's Club)

- Felton
- Boulder Creek
- Ben Lomond Transfer Station

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