

Talkin' Trash & more



Tips for Keeping Thurston County Healthy

www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org

REDUCE  REUSE  RECYCLE

Fall/Winter 2013

How recycling works

When your hauler empties your recycle cart, they take your mixed recyclables to a facility to sort them out. Thurston County's recyclables go to SP Recycling, near Tacoma. SP's special equipment sorts the items into different categories. The sorted recyclables are sold to manufacturers who want to make something new from them.

Using recycled materials requires less energy and fewer new materials than using virgin resources. For example, it takes 95% less energy to make an aluminum can from recycled cans than from virgin materials. Two-thirds of the aluminum ever produced is still in circulation today!



In this edition of *Talkin' Trash*, we'll explain some of the more technical aspects of recycling to give you a better idea of how it all works.

Why can't I recycle _____?

People often ask us why they can't recycle certain items in Thurston County. Most often, this question is about plastic containers. Plastic bottles, yogurt cups, and detergent jugs go in your recycling cart. Deli containers, clamshell-style containers, and drink cups go in the trash. So what makes one item recyclable and another trash?

For the most part, recycling is about supply and demand. Technically, almost everything *could* be recycled into something new. However, there are some items that manufacturers just aren't interested into recycling into new products. In business terms, this means there needs to be a market for an item before it can actually get recycled. Recently, the market for plastic bags and film declined so sharply that LeMay had to stop collecting them.

Like many other markets, the market for recyclable items fluctuates up and down. When the cost of virgin resources is higher, manufacturers will pay more for your recycled items. When the cost of resources drops, so does the value of recyclables.

What happens when I put the wrong items in my cart?

In order to get the highest value for recyclables, SP must sort items carefully and not let the wrong items contaminate the material that buyers want. When folks put non-recyclable items in their recycle carts, SP has to spend more time sorting them out and must pay to throw them away. This increases the overall cost of recycling.

Buyers aren't happy when the materials they buy are contaminated with the wrong items. If too many of the wrong items get mixed in with the good stuff, it can wear out equipment or produce a lower quality product. Manufacturers have to pay to dispose of the contaminants or sometimes the entire load of materials. If that happens too often, manufacturers may decide not to buy materials from SP anymore.

Some items don't go in your recycling cart because they cause more trouble than they're worth. Plastic bags are a great example. They can't go in your recycle cart, but some people put them in anyway. When plastic bags go through the sorting process at SP, they get caught and tangled in the sorting equipment. SP's workers must shut down the sorting equipment and manually cut the bags free. These shutdowns cost the facility about \$1,000 per day.



Workers remove plastic bags that have tangled in sorting equipment at SP Recycling Corp. Photo courtesy of Waste Connections, Inc.

This is why it's so important to only put accepted items in your recycle cart. Too much of the wrong stuff increases the cost of the recycling program in Thurston County. Keeping out unwanted materials is just as important as putting the good stuff in! Remember this recycling mantra:

"When in doubt, throw it out!"

Which plastics go in my cart?

In Thurston County, the number on the bottom of a plastic container doesn't tell you if it is recyclable. Use the following guidelines to determine if your item can be recycled:

1. Containers with a **neck smaller than the base** are recyclable. Examples: soda bottles, milk jugs, and peanut butter jars.



2. **Tubs that hold dairy products** are recyclable. Examples: yogurt, sour cream, cottage cheese, and margarine.



3. **Buckets** (kitty litter, 5-gallon) are also recyclable. Must be clean with handles removed.

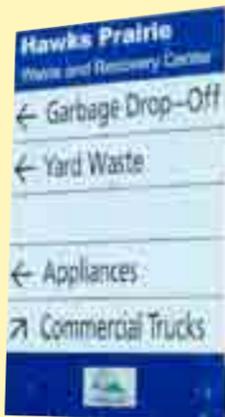


- ✗ NO plastic bags or molded foam in your curbside bin. Recycle foam at the Waste and Recovery Center at Hawks Prairie. Plastic bags go in the trash.**

Quick updates

Help us improve signs at the WARC

Over the next few months, Solid Waste educators and other county staff will discuss ways to improve the signs at the Waste and Recovery Center (WARC). Our goal is to help our users - you - navigate more easily throughout the site.



We need your input! If you visit the WARC and notice specific areas where the signs are unclear, please let us know!

Email ThurstonSolidWaste@co.thurston.wa.us or call 867-2281.

Help us update WhereDoITakeMy.org

Our database provides locations to take over 180 different items for reuse or recycling. We get our best information from you, the community.

If you know of a local business or organization that accepts items but you don't see it listed, please let us know!

Send your information to Loni Hanka at hankal@co.thurston.wa.us or call 867-2282.

Changes to green business program

It's easier than ever to apply for the Thurston Green Business program. Now there is no application fee! Learn more or apply now at www.thurstongreenbusiness.com.



New compost collection route coming

LeMay is creating a new food and yard waste collection route for residents in the Lake Lawrence and Scenic Shores areas. For questions, call LeMay at 923-0111.

Plastic film recycling collection ends

Last month, LeMay discontinued its plastic film recycling service. Until then, LeMay had collected plastic film from several local businesses as well as the plastic film drop box at the Waste and Recovery Center. The program included plastic bags, pallet wrap, and plastic strapping.

LeMay's decision to end the program was based on lack of markets for mixed plastic film. Recycling is a business - it takes equipment and staffing to collect recyclable materials. If nobody will buy the plastic film, there's no money to collect it.

Commercial customers and drop box users generate more than 15 tons of plastic film each month - around 187 tons each year! Right now, several tons of plastic film still sit unsold in a LeMay warehouse.

It's unfortunate to see the program go, but it's important to remember that recycling isn't a magic cure for waste. Recycling only works when someone wants to create a new product from old materials. That's why it's so important to make careful choices when buying items in the first place. You can help prevent waste by choosing reusable items and only buying something if you really need it.

Can I put plastic bags and other film in my SingleStream recycle cart instead?

No. Plastic bags and film tangle in equipment at the sorting facility. They do **NOT** go in your recycle cart.

Can I still recycle plastic bags at my local grocery store?

Check with the store. Some grocery stores may still collect bags if they have found another recycler. Check with the store manager to make sure the bags actually get recycled.

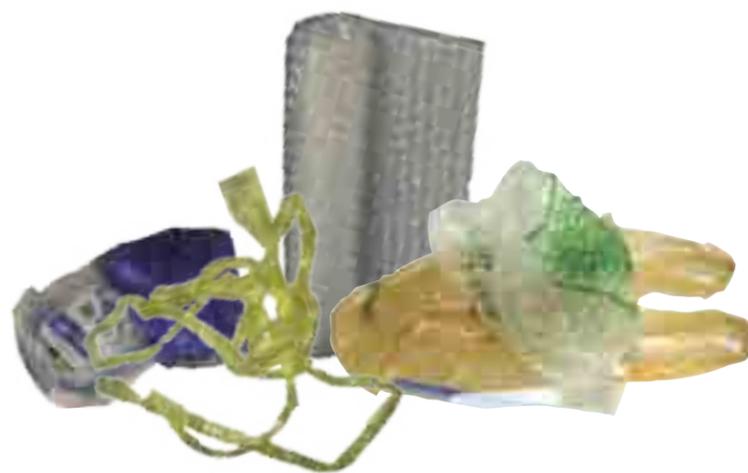
Can I put plastic film in any of the drop boxes at the Waste and Recovery Center?

No. You can't mix plastic film with plastic containers in any of the drop boxes.

What should I do with my plastic grocery bags now?

If you can't think of some way to reuse them (many folks use them to line smaller trash cans or to pick up dog poop), they go in the trash.

Next time you shop, bring your reusable shopping bags. Remembering your bags is like any other habit - it takes time and practice.



Learn more

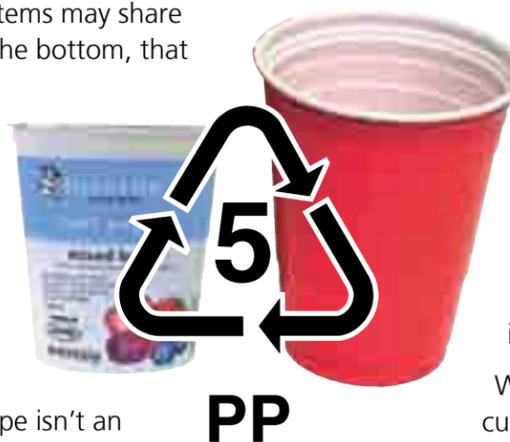
What should I do with paper grocery bags? Take your clean, dry paper bags to the Thurston County Food Bank. Food bank staff and volunteers use them to distribute food to clients. The food bank is located at 220 Thurston Avenue NE in Olympia.

What's in a number?

A yogurt container and a plastic drink cup both have the number "5" on the bottom. The yogurt cup goes in your curbside recycle cart, so that means the drink cup can go in too, right?

Wrong. Then what do the numbers mean? This is one of the trickiest recycling issues. Although two plastic items may share the same number on the bottom, that doesn't mean they are equally recyclable in Thurston County.

That number - called the Resin Identification Code (RIC) - indicates the type of plastic resin used to make the item. But each resin type isn't an exact formula; it's more of a group of related types of plastic. Manufacturers add different chemicals to the same base resin to produce different kinds of products. So even though cups, bags, and trays have the same RIC on the bottom, each item may be made from a different grade of that resin.



Items made from different resin grades cool and melt at different temperatures. This creates a gloppy mess when recyclers try to make new products out of the recovered plastic. As a result, plastic of mixed resin grades can only be recycled into lower-grade products, like plastic railroad ties and park benches. Recycling processors must keep the resin grades separate in order to turn recycled items back into new plastic bottles and tubs.

To add confusion, the "chasing arrows" icon that circles the number doesn't mean the container can be recycled or that it is made from recycled materials.

What does this mean for your curbside recycle cart? Forget the numbers. Instead, recycle items by shape:

- Bottles, jugs, and jars (have a neck smaller than the base).
- Dairy tubs (like yogurt, sour cream, and margarine containers).
- 5-gallon and kitty litter buckets.



Since you asked!

When we're out and about in the community, we often talk to folks who proudly consider themselves the "recycle police" at home. These super recyclers remove every bit of the label from a can or clean plastic bottles in the dishwasher.

We love that these folks go the extra mile, but don't worry if you prefer a simpler recycling routine. Here are some frequently asked questions about preparing your recyclables:

Q. Do I need to remove labels from bottles, jars, or cans?

A. No. You can leave the labels on cans as well as plastic and glass bottles and jars.

Q. Should I remove the clear plastic windows from envelopes and food boxes?

A. No. You can leave the little plastic windows on.

Q. Do I need to remove staples or the metal binding on spiral notebooks?

A. No. Recycling equipment can remove staples and metal spirals. You DO need to remove plastic binding from notebooks.

Q. Do I need to remove the clear plastic sleeves that newspapers and magazines sometimes come in?

A. Yes. You must remove the plastic sleeve before recycling paper. Plastic bags of any type **DON'T** go in your curbside recycle cart.

Learn more

Got a recycling question? Email ThurstonSolidWaste@co.thurston.wa.us or call 867-2491.

The trouble with recycling lids and caps



We're often asked why plastic caps and lids aren't recyclable in Thurston County. If the container is recyclable, why not the top?

1 Caps are often made out of a different type of plastic than bottles and other containers. Workers at the sorting facility don't have time to take caps and lids off of bottles. Different types of plastics can't be recycled together, so caps and lids will contaminate other recyclables.

2 Lids of all sizes are a problem at sorting centers. Small lids can jam the equipment. Dairy tub lids are larger, but they're also flatter. The automated sorting equipment can't separate them from paper and cardboard.

Q. Should I flatten cans?

A. No. Flattening cans was a requirement back in the early days of recycling. Today, the processing plant that processes our recyclables needs the cans unflattened. This helps the sorting equipment easily identify them.

Q. How well should I rinse containers? Do they need to be squeaky clean?

A. Remove any food from your containers, and give them a quick rinse if there is any food residue left inside. You certainly don't need to send your containers through the dishwasher.

Q. Do I need to remove the plastic spout from a half-gallon size milk or juice carton?

A. No. You can leave the plastic spout, but throw the lid in the trash.

Q. Should I remove the little metal or plastic rings from the necks of bottles and jars?

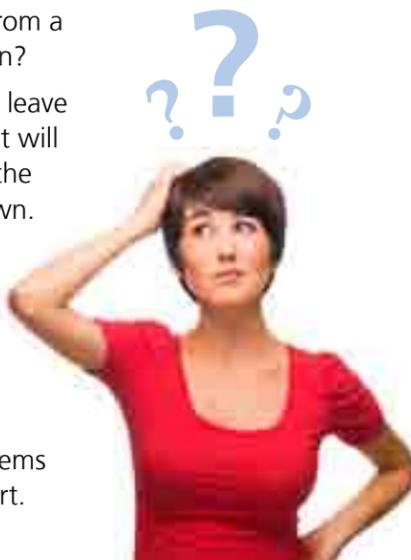
A. No. You can leave the rings on bottles and jars. This is true for plastic and glass containers.

Q. Should I remove the plastic handle from a metal pot or pan?

A. No. You can leave the handle on. It will burn off when the metals melt down.

Q. Can I put my recyclables in a plastic bag inside my cart?

A. No. Put all items loose in your cart.



Local governments say NO to plastic bags

Olympia, Tumwater, and unincorporated Thurston County have passed ordinances that ban stores from giving out plastic carryout bags. The ordinance goes into effect July 1, 2014.

The ban only applies to bags that stores put your items into at checkout. Plastic bags **NOT** included in the ban include:

- Bags used for bulk items, produce, or meat.
- Dry cleaning bags.
- To-go bags for prepared food.
- Newspaper bags.
- Any bags sold in packages.

Stores can choose to give customers paper bags, but must charge at least 5 cents per bag. Paper bags subject to the fee are standard grocery store size or larger. They must be 40 percent recycled content - usually this is printed on the bag. There is no fee for smaller paper bags and paper bags customers use before they get to checkout - like paper bakery or produce bags. Paper bags will be free for customers paying for food with an Electronic Benefit Transfer card (food stamps) or other food assistance program. Food banks and food assistance programs can still use plastic bags to distribute food. Reusable bag giveaways will focus on these audiences.

Stores will use the paper bag fee to offset the higher cost of paper bags. It also acts as an incentive for the public to bring their reusable bags, which have a much lower environmental impact than disposable bags.

A stakeholders group of local residents and businesses developed the draft ordinance language. The group provided the draft ordinance to all city councils and the Thurston County Board of Commissioners. Each of the remaining cities has the choice to adopt the ordinance. If all jurisdictions adopt the ordinance, it will provide a level playing field for businesses and create consistency for shoppers.

These actions come after a two-year process of working with the community to find ways to reduce the use of disposable shopping bags. Faced with declining markets for recyclables, LeMay had to stop collecting plastic bag and plastic film last month. Lack of recycling options just emphasizes the need for alternatives.

The bag ordinance doesn't go into effect until July 2014. This gives Solid Waste time to inform residents and businesses. It also gives the community time to adjust before the holiday shopping season, which minimizes the impact on businesses.

Learn more, read the draft ordinance language, or sign up for email alerts at www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org/Plastics.

3 Caps left on bottles can become projectiles when the bottles are compacted, which poses a danger to workers.

4 Lids and caps can trap liquids inside containers. To be recycled properly, containers must be empty.

What should I do with lids? Throw all plastic lids in the trash. This includes plastic bottle caps and plastic lids from dairy tubs (such as yogurt and margarine containers).

If you can't stomach throwing lids away, find a creative way to reuse them. Some people reuse the flat plastic lids by placing them under sticky bottles in cupboards or under flower pots.

What about metal lids? You can recycle a metal lid only if the lid is still attached to the can (and folded into the can itself). If the lid is not attached, put it in the bottom of the can and squeeze the opening slightly to prevent it from falling out. Loose lids accidentally get mixed in with paper and cardboard during the sorting process and pose a hazard to sorting staff.

Waste sort at the Waste and Recovery Center

Every five years, Thurston County Solid Waste hires a company to sort through samples of the county's garbage when it arrives at the Waste and Recovery Center. Waste sort workers separate the waste into nearly 90 categories including yard debris, food, textiles, and metals.

The results help Solid Waste educators understand what businesses and residents are throwing away and how to develop programs to help reduce waste. We can also compare data from previous waste sorts to see how our waste stream has changed over time.



The waste sorts don't just look at the county's waste stream in general. They also collect individualized data about waste from City of Olympia residents and businesses, and waste that Thurston County government employees generate.

Green Solutions, an environmental consulting firm, will conduct four waste sorts between October 2013 and July 2014. The waste sorts are spread out quarterly to capture changes in the waste stream at different times of year.

Once all four waste sorts are complete, we will post the results online. Visit www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org and click "Regulations, Plans, Studies" to see results from previous waste sorts.

Waste sorts for schools and businesses

Wish you had data about what's in your organization's trash? We can help! Solid Waste staff can help your business, school, non-profit, or government agency conduct a waste sort at your facility.



Visit www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org or call 867-2491 to learn more.

Give waste-free gifts this holiday season

As the holidays approach and crowded shopping trips loom in your future, consider a creative, low-stress and waste-free approach to gift giving. Between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, Americans throw away 25 percent more trash.

How can you minimize your impact this holiday season? Try these waste-free gift ideas!

Give the gift of experience.

- Plan a day trip to the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge or bike the Yelm-Tenino or Chehalis-Western trail. Pack a picnic lunch to add to the fun.
- Take a walk on the wild side. Visit the rescued animals at Wolf Haven in Tenino or head to Northwest Trek, Olympic Game Farm, or Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.
- Spend an evening at the theater. Harlequin Productions and the Washington Center for Performing Arts in Downtown Olympia are just two local opportunities to watch live performances.
- Give tickets to a sporting event or treat someone to a day at a museum.
- Buy lessons for a new sport or hobby like rock climbing, kayaking, or painting.

Donate to a worthy cause.

- Donate locally to an organization such as the Thurston County Food Bank.
- Help a family in need by donating to an international relief organization. For example, Heifer International uses your donation to purchase a farm animal, seeds, or clean water for people in developing countries.

- "Adopt" an endangered animal from an organization like The World Wildlife Fund. The symbolic adoption helps support the effort to protect wild animals and habitat.

Go homemade.

- Put homemade cookies and treats in reusable tins or plates. Bake a cake or pie and include the pan as a gift.
- Create a cookbook with favorite recipes. Prepare a sampling of treats to go along with it.
- Make soaps, candles, framed photos, ornaments, or other crafts.

- Give coupons for a service you can do, such as a home repair or washing a car.

Choose recycled or reusable gifts.

- Re-gift something meaningful that you no longer use, such as a well-loved book.
- Shop at thrift stores or estate sales for that hidden treasure of jewelry, books, or dress-up clothes for kids.
- Give a travel mug, durable water bottle, new lunchbox, or cloth produce and sandwich bags.

If you do plan to buy new gifts . . .

- Choose items with recycled content and less packaging.
 - Pick durable, well-made items that won't be headed for the landfill in a month's time.
 - Choose items that get used up or eaten, such as specialty foods or artisan candles and soaps.
- Give practical items, such as seeds for a gardener or fabric and thread for the sewing enthusiast.



Learn more

Check out more holiday resources online. Visit www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org/Holiday to find where to recycle holiday-related waste, learn how to care for a live tree, and get tips for throwing a waste-free holiday party.

City of Olympia news: Give a waste-free gift certificate for the holidays

One of the best gifts you can give is the gift of your time. A custom certificate giving time through an experience or showcasing your talent or skills is a great gift. Find PDFs of five customizable certificate designs at www.olympiawa.gov/zerowaste.

You can download a PDF template, choose a background photo, and add custom text to the appropriate fields. The possibilities are endless!

Simply print the certificate and put it in an envelope. A few ideas are listed below, but you'll find many more on the city's website.

Certificate ideas:

- Share a talent and give a lesson.
- Bake some bread or cookies.
- Take a loved one out on the town.
- Offer a trip to the museum or zoo.
- Offer yard work, house repairs, or babysitting.



Program saves nearly 100,000 lbs of food!

Over the past year and half, the Restaurant Rescue program has prevented prepared, unserved food from going to waste. The Thurston County Food Bank has been turning extra food from restaurants into delicious and nutritious meals for its clients.

The food bank's new refrigerated van keeps donated food at the proper temperatures during transport. Food bank volunteers take bulk-sized donations and repackage them into individual portions in the newly renovated kitchen.

During its first year, Restaurant Rescue recovered a whopping 21,867 pounds of prepared foods from restaurants in Thurston County! The program also rescued over 75,000 pounds from World Class Distributing, the distributor for Trader Joe's stores.

In addition to local restaurants, school districts have expressed interest in donating extra food prepared for school lunches. To ensure there is enough food for every student, school kitchens sometimes prepare food that doesn't get served. U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines prevent a lot of this food from being

reheated or served to students on another day. As a result, a lot of good food goes to waste.

Last May, Olympia High School became the first school in Thurston County to join the program by running a pilot to collect extra food prepared for lunches. The pilot was so successful that the program has expanded to include all 18 Olympia schools this fall. As this issue goes to press, Olympia schools have rescued 1,000 pounds of food this school year!

The food bank is making creative use of the food they're collecting from schools. For example, they cut up school hotdogs and combine them with beans rescued from a local restaurant to create a ready-to-eat meal.



Learn more

Your restaurant or school can help members of our community and prevent wasted food too! It's easy - restaurants interested in joining can contact Thurston County Food Bank Director Robert Coit at 352-8597. Schools wanting more information should contact Peter Guttchen at guttchp@co.thurston.wa.us or 867-2283.

Local business spotlight: Holy Lamb Organics strives for zero waste

Holy Lamb Organics is a small, local business that makes natural bedding products including mattresses, pillows, and comforters. Owner Willow Whitton is proud to say her business creates little if any waste.

So how does a business approach zero waste? Holy Lamb reuses, recycles, or composts almost all manufacturing by-products and sends almost nothing to the landfill. With some thoughtful planning, Whitton has incorporated a variety of creative solutions to get rid of waste. For example, the smallest scraps of thread, wool, and fabric are upcycled into small products in Holy Lamb's new ReKindle product line. Anything too small to use is composted using a vermiculture (worm) composting system or used as the bottom layer for paths in the community garden.

Holy Lamb Organics uses only organic cotton fabric and top-of-the-line wool grown by small U.S. sheep farmers. The manufacturing site is chemical and scent-free, and Holy Lamb used green building practices to restore the old general store that houses its showroom and manufacturing site. Holy Lamb also uses waste-free packaging to ship finished goods to customers. Whitton feels she has an obligation to educate her customers about why and how Holy Lamb Organics incorporates zero waste practices into everything it does.

Besides providing 14 green jobs to a rural town, Holy Lamb pays employees a competitive wage plus benefits. Employees also have the opportunity to participate in a



green commuting program and to work in the community organic garden.

Whitton came up with the idea for Holy Lamb Organics while on a backpacking trip in the Redwoods. When forced to buy a completely synthetic backpacking pillow, Whitton discovered the need for an all-natural pillow option. By the time she returned home, she had a full business plan mapped out in her head. Eleven years later, Holy Lamb Organics is thriving and growing.

Visit Holy Lamb Organics at 104 West Pine Street in downtown Oakville. The shop is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Learn more about the business or check out the products at www.hollylamborganics.com.

Recycle your tree for free!

Pickup options

LeMay compost collection/yard waste customers: Put trees in or near your compost cart (in sections 3 feet or less). Call 923-0111 for info.

City of Olympia garbage customers: For customers with Thurs./Fri. service, tree pickup is Sat., Jan. 4. For those with Tues./Wed. service, pickup is Sat., Jan. 11. Place tree in regular pickup spot by 6 a.m. on your collection day. Call 753-8368 and choose option 2 for more info.

City of Lacey residents: The City of Lacey and local boy scout troops are partnering to provide tree pickup inside city limits. For details, please visit www.ci.lacey.wa.us/treepickup or call Lacey Public Affairs at 491-3214.

City of Tumwater residents: Place trees at the nearest street corner by 8 a.m., Tues. Jan. 6. Call 754-4150 for more information.

Drop-off locations

All Thurston County residents: Take trees to the Waste and Recovery Center at 2418 Hogum Bay Road NE in Lacey from Dec. 26 to Jan. 12. Open weekdays 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sat. and Sun., 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed New Year's Day.

Rainier residents: Take trees to the drop box at 13010 Rainier Acres Road from Dec. 26 through Jan. 11. Open Fri, Sat., and Sun. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Rochester residents: Take trees to the drop box at 16500 Sargent Road from Dec. 26 through Jan. 12. Open Tues., Sat., and Sun., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Tenino residents: Take trees to 418 South Wichman Street S from Dec. 25 through Jan. 15.

Yelm residents: Take trees to Yelm City Park anytime from Dec. 26 through Jan. 10.

Residents near Shelton: Bill McTurnal Enterprises at 721 Kamilche Lane accepts trees from Dec. 28 through Jan. 9 during daylight hours. Weekends, leave trees by closed gate.

NO flocked trees. Please remove all ornaments, lights, tinsel, stands, and nails prior to recycling. Multi-family complex residents should check with their property manager for tree placement locations.



Attention teachers: Check out these resources for your students!

Trash Talk newsletter

Like *Talkin' Trash*? Now fourth and fifth grade students can get their own free *Trash Talk* publication! We'll deliver a copy of the newsletter to each student in your class four times throughout the school year. *Trash Talk* features information on recycling, reuse, household hazardous waste, yard waste, waste reduction, and more. It also has activities like word searches, crossword puzzles, and other games to make learning more fun!

Classroom presentations

Solid Waste offers free, fun presentations for kindergarten through eighth grade students about recycling, worms and worm bins, waste reduction, and household hazardous products. To read a description of each presentation, visit www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org/Youth.

Youth opportunities

Earn your RRR patch

Kids can earn the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle patch from Thurston County Solid Waste as a group activity or individually. The program is designed to teach youth the meaning of "reduce, reuse, recycle" by encouraging them to take better care of the environment and their neighborhoods. After completing activities and action projects, each group fills out a Patch Requirement Sheet. Thurston County Solid Waste will then send each participant a free patch for practicing the 3 Rs. Download instructions at www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org/Youth.



Don't stop with the patch program!

Solid Waste can help Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and youth in other organizations earn badges, pins, and service hours. Our helpful presentations show you what you can recycle in your community, how you can recycle at home, and where your garbage goes. We also have "learning by doing" activities that let group members become the teachers. Activities include showing people how to sort their waste at a public event like the Thurston County Fair.

- ▶ For information about any of our school or youth programs, please contact Colleen Minion at 867-2280 or minionc@co.thurston.wa.us.

Are your kids eating the lunches they bring to school?

Schools throw away a lot of stuff, and a lot of that stuff is food. In fact, 65 percent by weight of a typical school's garbage is uneaten food. Food to Flowers program staff spend a lot of time in school cafeterias and see a lot of food wasted at lunchtime. Imagine all of the great food that goes to waste - whole sandwiches, full yogurt cups, and tons of untouched fruit and vegetables!

All of this uneaten food is part of a larger problem. The National Resource Defense Council estimates that we waste 40 percent of all edible food in the U.S. This means the average household wastes \$1,350 to \$2,275 a year on uneaten food. When you toss out that food, you also waste all of the water and energy used to grow, transport, package, and landfill or compost it.

As a new school year begins, here are some tips to help your family reduce lunch waste, conserve resources, and save money.

Pack it in, pack it out. When your kids bring lunch from home, ask them to bring home any food they didn't eat. Looking at leftover lunch items is a great way to learn your kids' preferences and the right portion size. You may even be able to recover some of the uneaten food for future meals.

Let's do lunch. Involve your kids in packing lunch the night before. Kids are more likely to eat a meal that they helped prepare.

Learn what they like. Make a list of foods your kids like to eat for lunch and update it often. You may find a simple change like switching to a different apple variety will help your kids eat the apples in their lunch boxes more regularly.

Eat 'em again. Pack last night's leftovers into today's lunch, especially if it was popular the night before. You can even dress it up with an added ingredient or two.

Cut up fruits and veggies. If you pack a whole orange or peach, kids are more likely to throw away what they don't eat. Slice fruits and vegetables to control portions and let your child easily save leftover pieces for later.

Make a deal. Before offering your kids an after-school snack, request that they finish uneaten items from their lunches.

Don't forget the packaging. While you look for ways to cut down on food waste, consider also reducing the amount of packaging you send in your child's lunch. Use reusable containers instead of disposable bags, and avoid single-serving packaged food items.

Visit www.wastefreelunches.org/parents.html for more great waste-free lunch tips.



Learn more

The Food to Flowers program can help your school prevent waste! For more information, visit www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org/FoodtoFlowers or contact Peter Guttchen at 867-2283 or guttchp@co.thurston.wa.us.

Business may have a new opportunity to recycle foam!

Does molded foam packaging take up too much space in your company's trash dumpster? How about recycling it instead?

LeMay is exploring the possibility of adding a foam collection route for businesses. For more information, please contact Emmett Brown of LeMay at 486-8606 or emmettb@wcnx.org.

In the meantime, you can take your foam to DART Container Corporation at 600 Israel Road in Tumwater.



DART accepts molded foam blocks and clean foam food service products.

Recycling at DART is free, and the drop-off bins are open 24 hours each day.

Before recycling your foam:

- Make sure it has a number "6" recycle symbol.
- Rinse all food containers.
- Put all items in clear plastic bags.





Deep-frying a turkey? Recycle your used cooking oil!

With deep-fried turkey increasing in popularity, more of us wonder what to do with gallons of leftover cooking oil.

Don't dump it down the drain; oil sticks to pipes and can cause backups. Instead, take it to the Thurston County Waste and Recovery Center (WARC). From there, it gets recycled into new fuels. This service is available during regular WARC hours. Businesses should continue to use their disposal service.

Find tips on preparing your oil for recycling and storing oil for reuse at: www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehhm/pdf/cookingoil.pdf.

New Environmental Health Matters blog

There's a new way to get information about environmental health in Thurston County—the Environmental Health Matters blog! You'll find real-time information about issues like lake closures, beach advisories, and food-borne illness outbreaks.

The blog also provides tips for protecting your family from toxins, keeping drinking water clean, food safety, and more. You can also ask questions and join discussions about environmental health. To follow the blog and get notified about new posts, visit www.environmentalhealthblog.blogspot.com.

Tips to keep mold away

During winter, when windows are closed and humidity indoors increases, mold can grow in our homes. Here's how to keep your home mold free.

Increase ventilation. Open a window or use a bathroom fan for 30 minutes after bathing or cooking. Vent appliances such as dryers, dishwashers, and stoves to the outdoors, or open a window when running them.

Increase fresh air. Warm air holds more moisture than cold air, so outside air is drier than the heated air inside your home. Open windows and external doors daily. Doing this for only a few minutes prevents too much heat loss, while bringing in fresh air and lowering indoor humidity.

Allow for air flow. Pull furniture away from walls. Open curtains or blinds daily. Heat rooms to at least 60° and use a dehumidifier if needed.

For help reducing exposure to mold, toxins, asthma triggers, and other housing-related health risks, request a free Healthy Homes visit by calling 867-2674 or e-mailing healthyhomes@co.thurston.wa.us.

Happy, healthy holidays

Holidays bring brightness to winter's gray. Gathering with friends and family gives us something to look forward to during dreary winter days and long nights. Keep your household healthy this holiday season with the following tips.

Wash hands often. We all know it's important to wash hands after using the bathroom and before eating, but what about after grocery shopping, pumping gas, or using an ATM? Scrub germs and toxins away with warm water and soap! Lather hands for 20 seconds per washing, several times a day. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers kill germs in a pinch, but plain soap (avoid antibacterial soap, which contains toxins) and warm water work best.

Take Care with Guests. Make sure that hazards such as cleaning products, hot liquids, and medicines are always out of reach of children.



Store hazardous products in closed, locked cabinets, within another container in case of leaks or spills. Keep an eye on young kids when using the product

and store it again safely once you are done.

Suitcases and purses are tempting for children to explore, so make sure that medicines, vitamins, or personal care products are stored where kids can't get to them.

Decorate Safe. Some decorations, such as Christmas lights and artificial trees, can contain lead or other heavy metals. When buying new decorations, choose safer materials, such as cloth, and look for lead-free lights. Keep any decorations that may contain lead (lights, older painted ornaments, and red napkins) away from young ones; their bodies readily absorb lead. For everyone else, decorate and then wash up!

Reduce, reuse, recycle. Recycle what you can, limit what you use, and take unwanted household hazardous materials to HazoHouse (see back page for hours and location). HazoHouse accepts unwanted hazardous products such as cleaners, art supplies, used fluorescent lights, and anything that says caution, warning, danger, or poison on the label. To find out where to take unwanted or outdated prescriptions, call us or visit www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/personalhealth/unwantedmedication.

Check out our Healthy Holidays posts on the Environmental Health Matters blog.

Dispose of sharps properly to protect others

Every day, people with diseases such as diabetes, multiple sclerosis, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B and hepatitis C use "sharps" (hypodermic needles, syringes, lancets, and auto injectors) to manage their conditions. Consider that diabetes occurs in over 8 percent of Americans, and that many of those individuals test their blood sugar several times and use insulin daily. A used syringe can carry germs and infect others, and it's easy to see why sharps waste is a growing concern for solid waste handlers and public health officials alike.

To help stop the spread of infectious diseases, take the following steps to discard sharps properly.

1. Never flush sharps down the toilet or place them loose in the trash.
2. Place sharps in a sharps container (available at pharmacies, medical supply stores, and online) or an empty, puncture-proof, plastic bottle with a tight fitting lid. Two-liter pop, bleach, or laundry detergent bottles work well. Water bottles are made of a weaker plastic and aren't a good option.
3. When your container is full, tightly fasten the lid.
4. When using an empty plastic bottle, tape the lid shut and write "sharps waste" on the bottle in large letters with a permanent marker.

5. Place the sharps container in your trash; never put sharps in your recycling.

Many of us know that intravenous drug use is on the rise. This is true not only in Thurston County, but also across the nation. As a result, finding dirty needles in public places is possible. If you find a used syringe or other type of sharp on the street, in a park, or anywhere else, take the following steps to protect yourself and others:

1. Prevent a needle stick by using heavy-duty leather gloves, tongs, pliers, or a dust pan and a broom.
2. Don't try to re-cap a needle.
3. Pick syringes up by the "non-needle" end.
4. Put the syringe in a puncture-proof plastic bottle (see steps 1, 3, and 4 to the left).
5. Place the container in the trash (or in one of our syringe disposal drop boxes—coming soon).
6. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water.

Teach your children not to touch needles and to tell an adult right away if they find one.



Garbage and recycling resources

The information on this page is correct through 12/31/13

Contacts

Talkin' Trash is produced by Thurston County Public Works.

Contact Solid Waste staff:

By phone 867-2491
. 754-2933 (TDD)
. 786-5494 (recorded info)

By email
ThurstonSolidWaste@co.thurston.wa.us

Miss the last *Talkin' Trash*?

Catch up online! Visit www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org and click "Resources."

Join the conversation online!

 www.facebook.com/ThurstonSolidWaste

 www.twitter.com/#!/solidwastethuco

 www.youtube.com/user/ThurstonSolidWaste

The area code for all phone numbers in this publication is 360 unless otherwise noted.

Curbside collection (haulers)

Thurston County does not own or operate garbage and recycling trucks. Call your service provider for information about collection schedules.

- **Butler's Cove Refuse**
Eastern Grays Harbor (Summit Lake)
Pacific Disposal
Rural Refuse cust2183@wcnx.org
. 923-0111
- **Joe's Refuse** cust2188@wcnx.org
. (360) 736-4769 (long distance)
. or 1-800-525-4167

The above companies are owned by Harold LeMay Enterprises, which has been purchased by Waste Connections. Compost/yard waste collection service is also available in many of the service areas. Call for more information or visit www.thurston.lemayinc.com.

Town of Bucoda residents call 278-3525 to arrange for curbside trash and recycling service with LeMay Enterprises.

City of Olympia residents call 753-8368 or visit www.olympiawa.gov/wastewise. Olympia provides its own trash, recycling and organics collection service.

Public Health and Social Services, Environmental Health

Phone 867-2674
. 867-2603 (TDD)
Address 412 Lilly Rd NE, Olympia, 98506
Web www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehadm

Solid and Hazardous Waste section (867-2664)
www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehhw

Integrated Pest Management web
www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehipm

Gardening guides
www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehcsg

Healthy home advice
www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehhm

Environmental Health blog
www.environmentalhealthblog.blogspot.com

Facilities

Waste and Recovery Center

Located at 2418 Hogum Bay Road. From I-5: take the Marvin Road exit (Exit 111) and head north. Turn right onto Hogum Bay Road. The center will be on your right.

Rates (through 12/31/2013)

One ton = 2,000 lbs

Garbage

300 lbs or less \$18
More than 300 lbs \$119 per ton, prorated
(The per-ton garbage rate is 6 cents per pound.)
For refrigerated appliances, add a \$18 handling fee to the rate above. Rates include 3.6 percent state refuse tax.

Computers, Monitors, Laptops, TVs, E-Readers

Free through the E-Cycle Washington program. Take these items to the Goodwill donation station located near the recycle center.

Yard Debris

300 lbs or less \$9
More than 300 lbs:
Less than 10 yards \$45 per ton, prorated
More than 10 yards \$37 per ton, prorated
There is no state refuse tax on yard waste.

Hours

Weekdays: 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Saturdays and Sundays: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Drop boxes

Rainier: 13010 Rainier Acres Road SE.
Friday, Saturdays, and Sundays: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Rochester: 16500 Sargent Road SE.
Tuesday, Saturday, and Sunday: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Visit www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org for drop box garbage rates.

HazoHouse

Take household hazardous products to HazoHouse. Open Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Phone 867-2912. HazoHouse is located next to the recycling area of the Waste and Recovery Center. Service is free for residents; businesses pay a small fee.

Holidays

The Waste and Recovery Center, HazoHouse and all drop boxes are closed on the following holidays only: Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, and July Fourth.

Where Do I Take My?

Thurston County maintains a database of locations where residents can reuse and recycle many items. Visit www.WhereDoITakeMy.org.

Are we missing any locations? Call 867-2491 or email ThurstonSolidWaste@co.thurston.wa.us.

Reuse websites

The following websites provide an excellent way to sell or give away useable items. While you're there, you might just find some good deals on items you need.

- Thurston County's free online exchange program: www.2good2toss.com
- Craigslist: <http://seattle.craigslist.org/oly>
- FreeCycle: www.freecycle.org



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Olympia, WA 98512-9140

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Recycle drop-off bins

Recycling drop-off locations:

You can drop off recycling at the WARC and the Rochester and Rainier drop boxes (see addresses in the column at the left).

Items accepted at the locations

Thurston County's recycling drop-off locations accept:

- Newspaper.
- Glass bottles and jars.
- Tin and aluminum cans.
- Mixed paper.
- Plastic dairy tubs, bottles, jars, jugs, rigid plant pots and buckets.
- Corrugated cardboard.
- Foam (polystyrene with #6 recycle symbol) blocks and food containers. Must be clean and in a clear plastic bag. **(WARC only)**

Please place all materials **loose** in the bin – not in a bag (except foam). Bagged materials are difficult to separate at the recycling sorting facility.