



Diversions

Spring 2008

A Publication of the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority

PH036

Authority Op-Ed

Safe Handling of Toxics A Team Effort

Hardly a day passes without news about toxics in the environment and their harmful effects on the health of our families and ecosystems. Surprisingly it's not big factories but our very own homes that are among the top contributors! Leftover paint washed down the drain, spent batteries and thermometers thrown in the trash ... this is how toxic substances start their journey into our air, water and soil.

Household hazardous wastes must be properly disposed of—never in the garbage or down the drain or toilet. The CCCSWA and Valley Waste Management offer residents convenient recycling options. The Central Contra Costa Sanitary District is a key partner within Central County, providing programs designed to keep toxics out of our air, water and soil.

It can't be done without you! This special issue of *Diversions* is designed to help you identify hazardous waste, inform you about disposal options and— we hope—inspire you to do your part. Together we can keep our environment safe and clean.

With best wishes for the New Year,



Paul Morsen
Interim Executive Director

Hit the Reuse Room for Free Supplies!

Are you a fixer-upper on a budget? Consider checking your local Reuse Room before heading off to the nearest big box home improvement store. You just might be able to paint those chairs for FREE!



Brad Hetherington of Walnut Creek looks for free linseed oil at the Reuse Room. Product type and availability depend on what others have brought in.

The Reuse Room at the Central Contra Costa Sanitary District's Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility (HHWCF) in Martinez stocks a varying selection of cleaning, automobile, garden and other home supplies that have been dropped off by others. Walk in, browse the aisles and take all the items you want—some brand-new and unopened—without paying a cent.

Brad Hetherington drives from Walnut Creek whenever he needs linseed oil for his mother's wooden fence. The disabled veteran prefers "not spending \$20 at the store for a can of wood finish." In 2006 the HHWCF gave away 15 percent—or 300,000 pounds—of the 1.8 million pounds of waste it received through the Reuse Room.

For hours, location and contact information see the information box at right.

The Waste-Cutting Edge

Successful Pollution Prevention

10+ Years of Collecting Household Hazardous Waste

The Central Contra Costa Sanitary District (CCCSD) has treated the region's wastewater for over 60 years. A decade ago they added another service: the collection and handling of household hazardous waste (HHW). "Many toxic substances that end up in the sewage can't be removed by our treatment plant," explains David Wyatt, HHW Program Supervisor at CCCSD. "We try to keep that stuff out in the first place by taking it from folks at our drop-off facility in Martinez."

It works. Since the facility opened its doors in 1997, some 16 million pounds of HHW have been collected. Of that amount, 14 million pounds—almost 90%—have been recycled or redistributed for reuse. The remainder is disposed of safely.

Wyatt admits that for some residents it's a long drive out to Martinez, but alternatives, such as curbside collection for all HHW materials, aren't legal options. "Nobody would want pesticides or solvents sitting on the curb and spilling, putting our families, pets and the environment at risk," he says. "Unfortunately, having a facility in each community is financially prohibitive and nearly impossible to permit."

Paint is the most commonly dropped off material, but there are occasional surprises. "We've seen explosives, even World War II K-rations," Wyatt recalls. "One time someone brought in over 250 pounds of mercury. He said his father mined gold as a hobby."



HHW Program Supervisor David Wyatt carefully stores an old laboratory thermometer for recycling. It contains five grams of pure mercury, enough to contaminate 500 million gallons of water—more than a third of Lafayette Reservoir.

Quick, Safe, Convenient!

Drive-Through Toxic Disposal

When you need to get rid of old paint, garden chemicals or cleaning solvents, think drive-through! We're talking about the drop-off lane at the Central Contra Costa Sanitary District's Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection Facility in Martinez. This special lane makes disposal of your not-so-environmentally-friendly household chemicals a snap.



Jim Dacey of Walnut Creek waits for technician Winston Ingram to finish unloading old cleaners, pesticides and paint cans from his pickup. "I'm cleaning out my garage," he admitted.

Just pull in and relax behind the wheel while a well-trained technician unloads the contents of your trunk or pickup bed onto a cart, then zips it away. The time it'll take for you to do your bit for the planet? Only five minutes on average.

A few rules: materials must be packaged in sturdy, non-leaking containers (ideally, the originals) no larger than 5 gallons in size. The quantity for each visit is limited to 125 pounds for transportation safety reasons. However, you can make as many trips to the facility in one day as you like.

The drive-through is free for CCCSWA households. No appointment is needed.

HHW COLLECTION FACILITY

Central Contra Costa Sanitary District
4797 Imhoff Place, Martinez

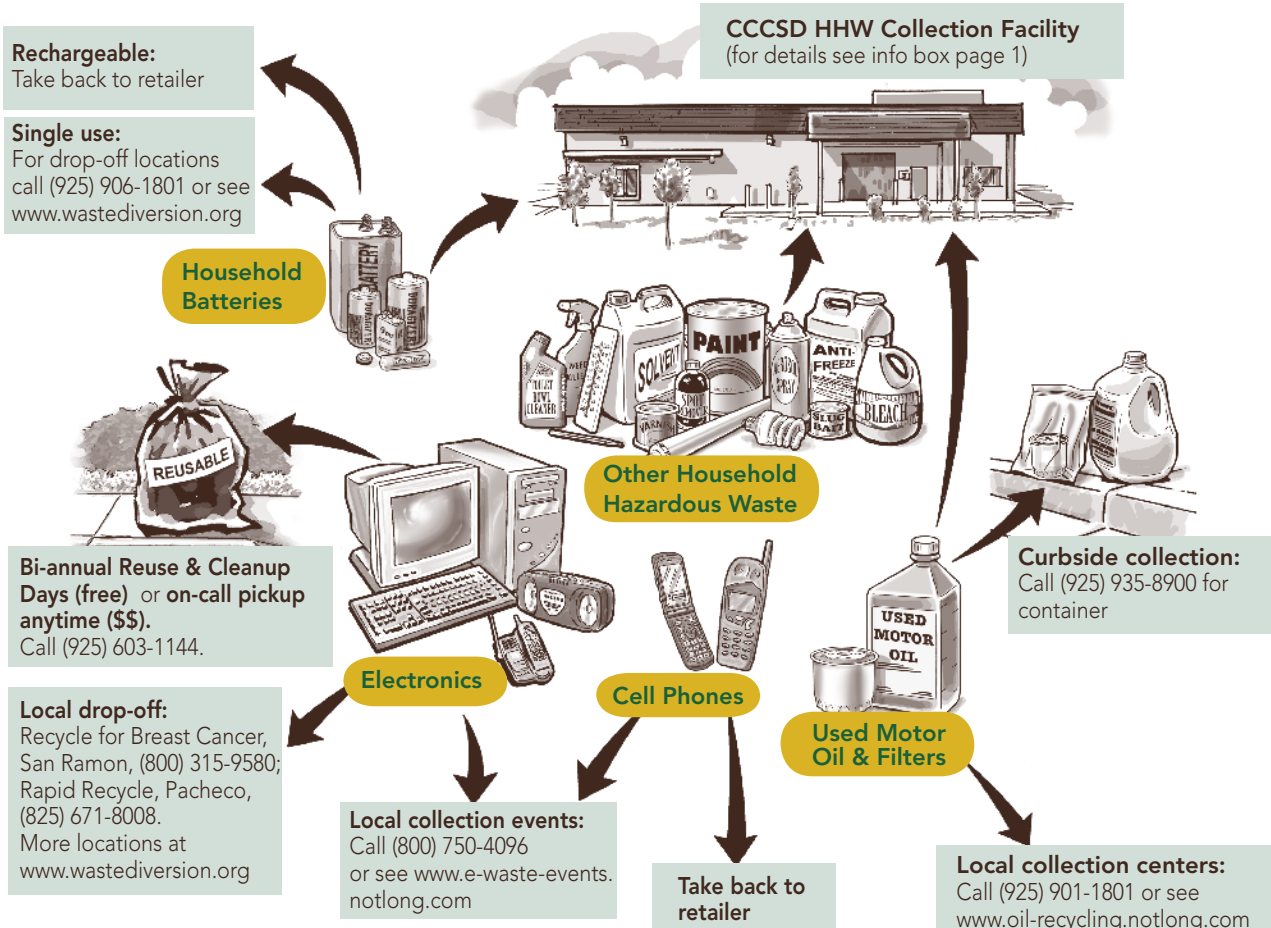
HHW Info Line: (800) 646-1431

Residents: Tue–Sat, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
(Reuse Room closes at 3:30 p.m.)

Businesses: Tue–Sat, by appointment only

Where to Take Household Toxics

For much of your household hazardous waste, there is more than one drop-off location—check the diagram below for all your options. Not sure about a material? Call the HHW Collection Facility at (800) 646-1431.



Heavy Metal Havoc!

Today it seems like almost everything is battery-powered, from grandpa's hearing aid to your electric wine bottle opener. While batteries may look small and innocent enough, in large numbers they can pack a punch! The EPA reports that Americans throw out over 358 million pounds of batteries each year, so that's a pretty serious punch!

One-time-use batteries can contain heavy metals such as mercury, silver and zinc. Better options are rechargeable batteries. However, what green benefits they gain in reusability, they lose in their composition: lead, nickel, cadmium, and lithium (more toxics).

When batteries are disposed of improperly, these harmful components can wreak havoc on our ecosystems and seep into the ground water. This tainted water can then make its way back into our homes.

So please, do the right thing and recycle your batteries. Stores that sell rechargeable batteries are required to collect spent ones for free. To find drop-off sites for non-rechargeable household batteries near you, check the diagram above.



Look for household battery collection stations at participating stores.

Spring Reuse and Cleanup Day Schedule

Community	Date
Unincorporated County	February & August
Danville	March & September
Walnut Creek	April & October
Orinda/Moraga	May & November
Lafayette	June & December

More information will be mailed two weeks prior to your Reuse and Cleanup Day. If you have questions, call Allied Waste Services at 925-603-1144.

Toxic Ingredients A Wake-up Call

"What? My Cell Phone Is Hazardous?"

Chatting on a cell phone may or may not be hazardous to your health, but throwing one in the garbage certainly is. Mobile telephones contain small amounts of highly toxic heavy metals such as lead and mercury, as well as other harmful chemicals. With Americans currently throwing away 125 million cell phones each year, even tiny quantities quickly add up to large amounts of toxic materials in our landfills.

It's illegal to trash a cell phone, so please take it to any electronic waste collection facility for recycling (see diagram above for local options). A convenient alternative is to return it to any wireless provider. California State Law requires cell phone retailers to take back used phones at no cost to the consumer.

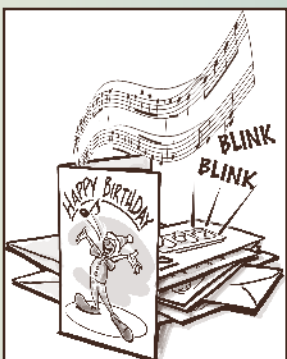
This type of "extended producer responsibility" puts manufacturers in charge of handling a product's toxic ingredients at the end of its useful life. Similar regulations may soon be voted into law for other common consumer products that contain hazardous materials.

Ask the Authority

Dear Authority,

For my birthday my friends gave me a bunch of crazy cards that play a song or have flashing lights. Is it okay to just toss these into my trash?

Celebrating in Contra Costa



Dear Celebrating,

Happy Birthday! Unfortunately those cute cards are not powered by the good wishes of all your friends. The tiny button batteries used in cards can be filled with toxic heavy metals that can pollute our water systems if they end up in the landfill. So no, you shouldn't toss them into the trash. Once you've enjoyed your cards all you can, cut out the batteries, place the card in your burgundy recycling cart and take the batteries to your nearest drop-off location. Check the diagram "Where to Take Household Toxics" on this page.

And when your friends' birthdays roll around, might we suggest a homemade card that impresses with creativity instead of lights and sounds?

The Authority

Do you have a question for us? Please send it to authority@wastediversion.org.

Contact information

CCCSWA..... 925-906-1801
 fax: 925-906-1805 web: www.wastediversion.org
 email: authority@wastediversion.org

GARBAGE:
ALLIED WASTE SERVICES..... 925-603-1144
 fax: 925-685-8153..... web: www.awsgcc.com
 For questions concerning billing, special cleanups, vacation hold requests, computer & TV collection, new service or your blue garbage cart.

RECYCLING:
VALLEY WASTE MANAGEMENT..... 925-935-8900
 fax: 925-935-1617 web: www.valleywaste.com
 For questions concerning the service of your burgundy recycling or green yard clippings carts, to request motor oil recycling containers, for recycling cleanups or information on the Walnut Creek Recycling Center.

CONTRA COSTA RECYCLING HOTLINE.. 1-800-750-4096
HOME COMPOSTING/GRASSCYCLING... 925-906-1806
HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE... 1-800-646-1431
REUSE & CLEANUP DAYS:
 Pacific Rim Recycling..... 1-800-999-6067



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