

Your Watershed: When the Holidays are Over - Recycling Paper, Holiday Trees and Electronic Wastes in Sonoma County

By: The Russian River Watershed Association

After the holidays, you'll likely be left with some cleanup—wrapping paper and packaging—not to mention the tree itself. If your gifts include new electronic devices, such as a new flatscreen TV, laptop or digital camera, you might find yourself with the challenge of properly disposing of your old equipment. Luckily, there are many opportunities in Sonoma County to easily recycle your wastes.

Wrapping paper--- Recyclable paper makes up a large portion, 27%, of what's going into our garbage in Sonoma County. Remember to recycle all non-reusable wrapping paper, carton and cardboard packaging in your single-stream curbside recycling cart. Only foil-backed and plastic wrapping paper cannot be recycled.

Packaging---If you accumulate packing peanuts and bubble wrap over the holidays, many local packaging stores, such as UPS Stores, are glad to accept these items for reuse.

Veggie food scraps--Compost your veggies! Fruits, vegetables, peels and seeds can be composted at home or put in the curbside yard waste carts for the municipal composting program. In fact about 35% of residential garbage is food waste, totaling nearly 800 tons a week in Sonoma County--a resource that could be used instead of landfilled.

Christmas trees--- Christmas trees can be recycled into compost and mulch. Your tree needs to be free of flocking, tinsel, decorations and its stand for recycling.

For curbside pick up and drop-off options, call the Sonoma County Eco-Desk at 565-3375 or visit www.recyclenow.org

Electronics---Under a State mandate, electronics cannot be put in the garbage. An electronic device is anything with a circuit board. Look for devices with digital displays or programmable features. Examples include computers, TVs, laptops, printers, answering machines, CD & DVD players, stereos and cell phones.

You have three options for proper disposal of electronics: 1. bulky item pickup, 2. curbside recycling, and 3. drop-off recycling.

1. Bulky item pickup is available by appointment for residential garbage customers in Healdsburg, Petaluma, Santa Rosa and Windsor. To schedule a home pickup, call your garbage company.

2. Curbside recycling for household electronics, not larger than 2 feet in any dimension, is available for garbage customers in Cloverdale, Cotati, Healdsburg, Sebastopol, Petaluma, Rohnert Park and in unincorporated areas. Devices with screens (such as TV's, computer monitors and laptops) and batteries are **not** accepted curbside.

3. Drop-off recycling for non-working and working electronics is available at all County Refuse Disposal Sites, at Goodwill Industries of the Redwood Empire donation centers, Salvation Army and at other businesses in Sonoma County. For a complete list, call the Sonoma County Eco-Desk at 565-3375 or visit www.recyclenow.org

Batteries---Batteries should not be placed in the trash. Batteries are recycled by different processes than electronic equipment and should be removed from electronic equipment prior to recycling. By law, retailers selling rechargeable batteries are required to take back used rechargeable batteries from their customers. It is often more convenient, however, to use local recycling programs rather than to take rechargeable batteries back to the store from which they were purchased.

Dispose off all kinds of batteries, including alkaline and rechargeable batteries, through Sonoma County's Household Toxics Program. Call the Sonoma County Eco-Desk at 565-DESK(3375) or visit www.recyclenow.org for more information.

More Recycling Information---For additional questions about recycling and disposal options in Sonoma County, see the Sonoma County Recycling Guide printed in the AT&T phone book Yellow Pages under Recycling, call the Sonoma County Eco-Desk at 565-DESK(3375) or visit www.recyclenow.org

The Sonoma County Eco-Desk is a project of the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency, a joint powers authority of the nine incorporated cities and the County of Sonoma. The specific focus of the Agency's efforts is waste diversion required by State law AB939 in the following categories: wood waste, yard waste, household hazardous waste, education, diversion and planning.

This article was authored by Karina Chilcott of the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency on behalf of RRWA. RRWA (www.rrwatershed.org) is an association of local public agencies in the Russian River Watershed that have come together to coordinate regional programs for clean water, fisheries restoration, and watershed enhancement.