

Advice from the landfill

Holiday tips to help reduce, reuse and recycle waste

BY ANH NGUYEN



From operating the Neal Road Recycling and Waste Facility to implementing programs that divert waste from landfills, the Butte County Public Works Waste Management Division provides friendly advice to correctly dispose of and recycle your holiday trash.

“Neal Road Recycling and Waste Facility (NRRWF) typically receives about 7 tons of cardboard per month, but in January it doubles, likely because of online shopping,” Solid Waste Division Manager Eric Miller says. “Before throwing the cardboard in the recycling bin, we ask customers to flatten the cardboard.”

Recycling 1 ton of cardboard can save 390 kWh of energy, about 46 gallons of oil and around 6.6 million BTU’s of energy, according to Waste Management’s website. Waste Management, a private waste collection and recycling company, serves Chico and other areas throughout Butte County.

The NRRWF recycles cardboard but not packaging waste, such as plastic shrink-wrap, bubble wrap or Styrofoam. “We recommend that customers call local shipping stores to see whether they can reuse bubble wrap,” Miller says.

Considering eco-friendly gift wrapping? Wrap gifts in scarves, sheets, tablecloths and even paper bags to reduce wrapping paper waste. “Wrapping paper and tissue paper are recyclable and can be put in your recycle bin,” according to Recycling Coordinator Valerie Meza.

“Another waste stream that increases after the holidays includes covered electronic waste such as computers

and TVs,” Miller says. “We have seen a 12% increase in electronic waste the last few years.”

During COVID, more people upgraded their electronic equipment, like TVs and laptops, for both working and entertainment purposes.

“We promote the reuse of usable TVs, furniture or appliances that are in good condition,” Meza says. “You can donate (unused clothes and old furniture) to the Restore Housing for Habitat, Goodwill, Salvation Army or similar organizations. Or sell usable homewares on either Craigslist or Facebook Marketplace.”

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ERIC MILLER

Solid Waste Division Manager, Butte County Public Works

How about ‘holiday’ green waste? Remember to dispose of your Christmas tree and your wreath by removing wire and plastic, tinsel, lights and ornaments before throwing your wreath and tree in your green waste bin.

Northern Recycling and Waste Services will accept

Self-service recycling bin at the NRRWF which accepts flattened cardboard only. NRRWF cannot recycle Styrofoam, plastic shrink wrap, or bubble wrap. PHOTO COURTESY OF BUTTE COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS /NRRWF

Christmas trees at its green waste facility in Paradise; Waste Management and Recology will accept curbside Christmas tree pick up though January throughout their service areas in Butte County. Boy Scouts Troop 2 in Chico will collect and recycle Christmas trees by appointment. Contact Boy Scout Troop 2 at <https://www.troop2chico.com/christmas-tree-pickup>.

Also consider ways to reduce or divert food waste from those holiday feasts. The California Department of Food and Agriculture reports that approximately 6 million tons of food waste is annually discarded. Non-perishable foods (foods in unopened cans or boxes) may be donated to local food banks.

Though food waste is compostable, it should not be mixed into your green waste bin. And be careful with what you put in your recycle bin. Used foil from food preparation, plastic utensils, plates and cups from restaurants may not be recyclable even though some products are advertised to be compostable. Cartons that contain a mix of plastic and foil are not recyclable.

The holiday season is usually a time when many householders clean up their homes and replace old items. This holiday season start new family traditions. Upcycle old goods for resale or reuse. Generate less trash. And reduce your food waste. Changing these behaviors will not only save you money, but will also help conserve environmental resources and extend landfill life.

The Neal Road Recycling and Waste Facility is open from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., seven days a week. The facility is closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year’s Day, but open on Christmas Eve from 7 a.m. to 12 p.m. For dumping guidelines, please visit <https://www.buttecounty.net/publicworks/Services/Neal-Road-Recycling-and-Waste-Facility>