

Waste Prevention Tips

Santa Barbara County residents throw away more than 400,000 tons of trash each year. Source reduction is another term for waste prevention, a technique to limit the amount of trash that ultimately ends up in landfills. Source reduction seeks to reduce both the volume and toxicity of trash being generated and consumed by focusing on product design, manufacture, and consumption/use. Source reduction can conserve natural resources, save energy, reduce air and water pollution, and help cut waste disposal and handling costs.

The following tips were taken from the United States Environmental Protection Agency's "Consumer Handbook for Reducing Solid Waste":

REDUCE

TIP 1: Reduce the Amount of Packaging

- Avoid buying products with excess packaging;
- When appropriate, use products that you already have on hand to do household chores;
- Consider buying large, economy-sized household items that are used frequently, such as laundry soap, shampoo, dishwashing detergent, pet foods, and cat litter; such sizes usually have less packaging per unit of product. For food items, choose the largest size that can be used before spoiling;
- Whenever possible, buy products such as grocery, hardware, and household items in bulk, concentrated form, or in refillable packages; they often require less packaging and less energy to transport to the store, thereby saving money as well as natural resources.

TIP 2: Adopt Practices that Reduce Waste Toxicity

- Take actions that use nonhazardous or less hazardous materials to accomplish the task at hand. Instead of using pesticides, for example, use non-toxic methods to control insects and pests; consider using nonhazardous products to complete the same job as products using hazardous components;
- If you do use products containing hazardous materials, use only the amounts needed; donate leftover materials to a business or charity or share them with neigh-

bors; dispose of used motor oil and other household hazardous materials at a facility that accepts them for recycling;

- For products containing hazardous components, read and follow all directions on product labels. Make sure the containers are always labeled properly and stored safely.

REUSE

TIP 3: Consider Reusable Products

- Consider using sturdy and washable utensils and tableware at home, for picnics, outdoor parties, and potlucks;
- Use washable and reusable cloth napkins, sponges, and dishcloths around the house;
- Purchase items that are in refillable containers (e.g. bottles and jugs for beverages and detergents);
- Whenever possible, use rechargeable batteries;
- When using single-use items, take only what is needed (e.g. take only one napkin or ketchup packet if more are not needed).

TIP 4: Maintain and Repair Durable Products

- Research large purchases (e.g. stoves, televisions, cars) in order to determine which products offer the best energy efficiency, durability, longevity, and reparability;
- Maintain and repair appliances and equipment;
- Purchase high quality, long-lasting tires for vehicles and bicycles; to extend tire life, check the tire pressure once a month and rotate tires routinely;
- Mend clothes instead of throwing them away; repair worn shoes, boots, handbags, and briefcases wherever possible.

TIP 5: Reuse Bags, Containers, and Other Items

- Bring your own canvas shopping bag or reuse grocery bags from previous purchases; many stores are happy to offer discounts;
- Bring a reusable cup or mug that can be washed and therefore, reused again and again;
- Pack lunches in a reusable bag with a cloth napkin and reusable drink container;
- Reuse paper and plastic bags, and twist ties; if only



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one or two items are being purchased, consider not taking a bag;

- Reuse scrap paper and envelopes; make double-sided copies of reports and office memos;
- Save and reuse gift boxes, ribbons, and larger pieces of wrapping and tissue paper;
- Save packaging, colored paper, egg cartons, and other items for reuse or for arts and crafts projects;
- Reuse food packaging (e.g. margarine tubs, coffee cans, water bottles) for storage or craft projects;
- Find other uses or homes for old draperies, bedding, clothing, towels, and cotton diapers; cut up what's left for use as patchwork, rags, doll clothes, rag rugs, or other projects;
- Reuse newspaper, boxes, packaging "peanuts" and bubble wrap to transport or ship packages.

TIP 6: Borrow, Rent, or Share Items Used Infrequently

Seldom used items often collect dust, rust, and take up valuable storage space. Borrowing, renting, or sharing such items saves money and natural resources.

- Rent or borrow such items that are used infrequently:
 - Power tools
 - Boats
 - Formal wear
 - Party decorations and supplies such as tables, chairs, centerpieces, linens, dishes, and silverware
 - Audiovisual equipment
 - Ladders, chain saws, buffers, rug cleaners, and garden tillers
- Share newspapers and magazines with others or donate them to community groups and nonprofit organizations.

TIP 7: Sell or Donate Goods Instead of Throwing Them Out

- Donate or sell items to thrift stores or other organizations in need;
- Sell secondhand items at fairs, bazaars, swap meets, and garage sales;
- Give used clothing to family members, neighboring families, or the needy.

RECYCLE

TIP 8: Choose Recyclable Products and Containers and Recycle Them

- Purchase products made of materials that are collected for recycling (i.e. aluminum, cans (aluminum, bi-metal, steel, tin), cardboard, glass, mixed paper, newspapers, and plastic containers #1 PETE and #2 HDPE, and **hard** plastics #1–#7.
- Take used antifreeze, vehicle batteries, motor oil, paint, stains, solvents, adhesives, aerosols, roof tar, drain openers, pesticides, household cleaners,

and household batteries to facilities that accept them for recycling.

TIP 9: Select Products Made from Recycled Materials

- Purchase products made from recycled content such as bottles, cans, paper wrappings, bags, cereal boxes, stationery, wrapping paper, and computer paper;
- When checking products for recycled content, look for a statement that recycled materials were used and, if possible, choose the product containing the largest percentage of recycled content.

TIP 10: Compost Yard Trimmings and Some Food Scraps

- Compost yard trimmings and food scraps; if you do not know how to compost, request a copy of the County of Santa Barbara Public Works Department's publication entitled, *The Answer Is Backyard Composting and Yard Waste Reduction* or consult the United States Environmental Protection Agency's web-site: www.epa.gov/compost;
- If there is no room for a compost pile, offer the compostable materials to community composting programs or garden projects;
- If you have a yard, invest in a lawnmower that leaves grass clippings on the lawn to decompose and return nutrients back to the soil, rather than bagging and disposing of them.

TIP 11: Other Waste Prevention Tips

- Patronize stores and businesses that practice source reduction and other environmentally helpful activities; Call or write letters to those that do not;
- Eliminate junk mail by removing your name from direct mailing lists;
- Cancel unused catalog and magazine subscriptions;
- Circulate memos and publications with a routing slip, rather than making individual copies for everyone in the office.



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