

December 01, 2011

News Release

For Immediate Release

Reduce Holiday Waste With Easy Tips

As the holiday season approaches, statistics show that solid waste (trash) generation skyrockets. The City of Springfield's Solid Waste Management Division has a number of suggestions to reduce holiday waste.

- Food waste during the period between Halloween and New Years, is the highest of any time during the year.
 - Before you prepare the holiday meals, take a head count and adjust the amount of food accordingly to avoid waste.
 - Be creative with left-overs.
- Holiday cooks are also advised to use extra care to properly dispose of grease generated by large holiday meals so that it doesn't create problems in the City's sewer lines. Never pour grease down the drain. Even if you run hot water down the line, the grease cools and solidifies as it moves through the sewer line. Hot water will not solve the problem!
 - Pour grease into a metal or glass container and place in the trash. You can also line your container by pouring cooled grease into a plastic bag. You may also use a heat-resistant liner.
 - A lid is required on a container holding liquid grease. Containers that contain solid grease do not need a lid.
 - Scrape food and grease from dishes and pans prior to washing. This type of waste also can be placed in the trash.
 - Use a basket or strainer in the sink to catch greasy food scraps.
 - To receive a copy of a brochure on "fat-free sewers", contact: Randy Lyman, Clean Water Services, 864-1921.
- Reduce and reuse wrapping
 - Make the wrapping a part of the gift; for example, wrap a kitchen utensil in a new kitchen towel.
 - When shopping, consolidate purchases into one big bag, rather than getting a new bag at each stop.
 - Decorate brown paper sacks as wrap using rubber stamps, recycled Christmas cards, or drawings.
 - Consider using paper that can easily be recycled, such as old comic sections, old maps, children's art work.
- Save gift bags, boxes, bows and ribbons for reuse next year.
- Recycle wrap and packing materials
 - Paperboard (example: wrapping paper rolls and cardboard) are easily recycled at the City of Springfield's Recycling Centers. Christmas gift wrap also is accepted - no plastic and no foil. Call the Recycling Hotline (864-1904) or visit the City's web site for locations and hours of operation.

- Styrofoam packing peanuts and sheets can be recycled in several locations in Springfield. Call the City's Recycling Hotline (864-1904) or visit the website listed above for information.
- If you're replacing old, used items with new ones, donate clothes and useable household items to local charities.
- Reduce holiday toxics
 - Do not burn wrapping paper - the colored paper contains lead and other heavy metals.
 - Make sure your home is "childproof" when young visitors come: put cleaners and pesticides out of reach; don't leave alcohol, perfume or aftershave under the tree.
 - Do not use imported, decorative candles that emit black smoke - this often indicates the presence of lead in the wick.
 - Bubble lights can contain a toxic liquid; bulbs can cause burns - don't leave young children alone with decorated trees.
 - Mistletoe is highly toxic to children and pets - use artificial rather than the real thing. Other plants with toxic or irritating characteristics include: amaryllis (bulb), balsam, cedar, Christmas cactus, Christmas rose, elderberry, English Ivy, holly, juniper, narcissus (bulb) and several types of lily.
- Reduce litter
 - Make sure your trash is bagged securely so it doesn't blow out of trashcollection vehicles.
 - Don't throw your old tree on the side of the road - take it to the end-of-season collections around town. These collected trees are used to create habitat or mulch. Call the City's Recycling Hotline (864-1904) or visit the City's website for locations and dates.
 - Did Santa leave you a new computer or other electronic surprise – don't throw the old one in the trash – have it recycled and disposed of properly at the Computer Recycling Center – 866-2588.

Carefully planning errands and carpooling saves fuel, lessens pollution, makes maximum use of your time and can be a pleasant opportunity to share your holiday preparations with friends and family.

More information on recycling, **including Christmas trees**, is available at the City's Recycling Hotline at 864-1904 or on the City Web site:

For more information, contact: Barbara J. Lucks, Interim Sustainability Officer, Department of Environmental Services, 864-2005.