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News Release

For Immediate Release

Holiday Waste Reduction Tips

As the holiday season approaches, the City of Springfield’s Solid Waste Management Division has a number of suggestions to reduce seasonal waste. Statistics show solid waste (trash) generation skyrockets during the final months of the year.

Food Waste

Food waste during the period between Halloween and New Year’s Day, is the highest of any time during the year. Before you prepare holiday meals, take a head count and adjust the amount of food accordingly to avoid waste. Be creative with leftovers.

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! Instead, 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, Public Works Department, Sanitary Services Division, 864-1921.

Wrapping Waste

To reduce and reuse wrapping, try making 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 newspaper comic sections, old maps, or children’s artwork. Save gift bags, boxes, bows and ribbons for reuse next year.

Another good idea is to recycle wrap and packing materials. Paperboard (example: wrapping paper rolls and cardboard) is 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 website for locations and hours of operation: http://mosspringfield.civicplus.com/465/Recycling.

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” for young visitors: put cleaners and pesticides out of reach; don’t leave alcohol, perfume or after-shave 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.

More Tips

- Make sure your trash is bagged securely so it doesn’t blow out of trash-collection 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, reduces 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 on the City’s Recycling Hotline at 864-1904 or on the City’s website at: http://mosspringfield.civicplus.com/465/Recycling.

For more information, contact: Barbara J. Lucks, Materials Recovery/Education Coordinator, Springfield Public Works Department, 864-2005.