



Waste Wise

Reduce • Reuse • Recycle

A Public Service Of Tillamook County Solid Waste • October 2019

PLASTIC POLLUTION FROM SINGLE USE PLASTIC BAGS: SOON TO BE A THING OF THE PAST IN OREGON AS OF JANUARY 1, 2020

Oregon has taken a lead nationally in addressing the impact of plastic pollution on our environment and marine life. During the last legislative session the Oregon Legislature passed the "Sustainable Shopping Initiative" banning single-use plastic bags by retail outlets and restaurants. All of our local senators and representatives voted in favor of the new law, and it was supported by Safeway and Fred Meyer as well as numerous local small businesses and restaurants in Tillamook County.

Tillamook County Master Recyclers worked on this issue locally and then advocated at the state level for more than a year because we believe plastic bags create litter, despoil our landscape and beaches and find their way into our marine and bird life as micro plastics as they degrade.

The Tillamook County Commissioners recognized the negative impact of single use plastics by passing a resolution in April 2019 that noted " Plastic waste degrades into smaller and smaller micro-particles that carry chemical toxins, much of which finds its way into the ocean. Eight million tons of plastic enter marine waters every year."

What Does the Ban Include and What is Exempt?

The ban on plastic bags is actually very narrow so we wanted to alert you to what it includes and what it doesn't include.

Includes:

- Single-use check out bags at grocery and other retail stores including farmer's markets
- Single-use carry out bags at restaurants

Does not include:

- Bags provided for produce, nuts, grains, greeting cards, and small hardware items
- Bags for unwrapped prepared food or bakery goods
- Bags containing frozen meat or fish, flowers or other items to address dampness or sanitation
- Bags for prescription drugs
- Bags for garments or dry cleanings
- Bags sold in packages containing multiple bags for food storage, garbage or pet waste

PLASTIC BAG FACTS:

- It takes 20-30 years for a plastic bag to break down
- Plastic breaks down into toxic micro-particles which find their way into fish, turtles, whales, shellfish and sea birds
- Plastic ingestion has been identified in 56% of aquatic mammals
- There will be more plastic than fish in the ocean by 2050
- Plastic bags are using up fossil fuels which are pollutants and non-renewable
- China is no longer taking our mixed plastic waste including plastic bags for recycling
- Only 8% of plastic bags and non-durable plastics are recycled and plastic bags clog recycling machines in sorting facilities

Goal is to Encourage Using Reusable Bags:

The new law requires that retail businesses and restaurants charge a five cent fee for paper bags made from at least 40% post consumer recycled paper, and durable plastic or fabric reusable bags. The reasons for the fee are 1) to offset the cost of paper bags which are more expensive than the plastic carryout bags and, most importantly 2) because the goal is not to increase the use of paper bags but to encourage people to get used to bringing their own reusable bags. The experience from cities that already have a ban in place is "you get used to it"! There is an exemption from the fee for who have WIC vouchers or a food stamps card.

DRUGS AND SHARPS:

The improper disposal of medicines may contaminate our drinking water sources, and affect both animal and human health.

Unused prescription and over-the-counter drugs poured down the sink or flushed down the toilet can be extremely harmful. In homes with septic tanks, drugs can leach through the septic system into the ground and seep into ground water. In communities where residences are connected to wastewater treatment plants, drugs can pass through the treatment system and enter rivers, lakes, and the bay or ocean. This negatively affects drinking water supplies, as well as marine life. Water treatment plants are generally not equipped to routinely remove medicines. Dissolved drugs that wind up in our bays and oceans wind up in our fish, which we then catch and eat.

Throwing unused drugs in the trash is also risky, and can lead to the poisoning of children and pets. Drug addicts have been known to dig through garbage cans looking for pills.

So how should we best get rid of unwanted or expired drugs? Drug take-back programs are the most secure method to deal with unwanted or expired drugs. Drugs can be dropped off at the Sheriff's Office any time, or you can bring both prescription and over-the-counter drugs to the Drug Take-back Event at the Tillamook Community Health Clinic (801 Pacific Avenue) on:

Saturday, October 26th • 10am to 2pm

What about sharps? At this event residents can also dispose of sharps. "Sharps" are needles, syringes with needles, and any sharp object that comes into contact with human blood, fluids and tissues with pathogens – including the small lancets used to check blood sugar levels. Bring your sharps in a closed red sharps container, and deposit them off in our secure disposal box.

Unused prescription and over-the-counter drugs and sharps collection



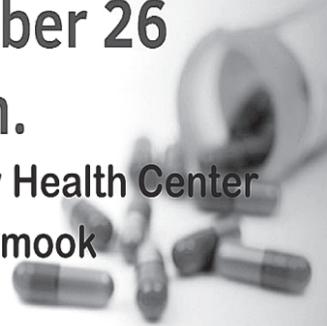
Saturday, October 26

10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Tillamook Community Health Center

801 Pacific Ave., Tillamook

Free-of-charge for Tillamook County residents



WHAT'S ON THE RECYCLING HORIZON?

In our June 2019 issue of WasteWise, our lead story was about how recycling is still worth the effort, even if recycling markets are in turmoil. Since then, there have been changes on the markets, and although the changes aren't all good, there are signs for improvement on the horizon.

In the short term, the supply of recyclable materials remains much higher than demand on domestic markets, especially on the West Coast. This had led to further price drops, and several types of recyclable materials are not generating enough revenue to cover the expense of handling them. Although the costs are still lower than landfilling costs, current circumstances put a damper on planning activities.

On the upside, significant investments are being made across the country that are expected to improve market conditions. A significant capacity expansion in the Pacific Northwest should lead to an increase in demand for certain paper types within the next six months. Other grades are predicted to stay weak for a few years.

Continued growth is expected in the production of common plastics, including PET, HDPE, PP and PS. While this would normally equate to an uptick in recycling markets, low-cost fossil fuels – especially fracked gas – smother the growth potential for recycling revenues. Even so, market experts predict continued demand for the items covered by our recycling programs: #1 PET bottles, #2 HDPE bottles and jugs, and #6 EPS "Styrofoam," which we are able to densify in our local program.

The recycling markets for metals and cans continue to fluctuate based on demand, which reflects the strength of the economy. Recycled steel tends to go into discretionary purchases, especially the construction and automotive sectors.

These and other factors will be weighing on the minds of members of the Solid Waste Advisory Committee, who are reviewing priorities and opportunities through the update of our Comprehensive Materials and Solid Waste Management Plan. Contact the Solid Waste Department for more information, and to see how you can become part of that process!



DEAR MS. WASTEWISE:

Dear Ms. Wastewise: Now that all the tourists are gone and life is returning to normal, I need to know where I can take all the bottles, cans, and cardboard left by our guests. Which transfer station would you recommend I visit for the best service? – "Full timer"

Dear "Full timer": There are three recycling and solid waste transfer stations in Tillamook County, and each of them offers a complete set of recycling services, as well as trash disposal opportunities. The materials you can recycle at each of them include: cardboard, mixed paper, #1 plastic bottles, #2 plastic jugs, #2 frosty jugs, tinned cans, scrap metal, and glass bottles. Recycling is sorted the same way at all three locations. Even though each site has its own personality, they are similar in the rates charged, and access to all trash and recycling services (including parking) is on an asphalt surface with good rainwater management. Now that the hectic nature of summer is past, feel free to take a little time while you're recycling, and chat with the knowledgeable staff members. They are all friendly and anxious to help, and they will do their best to make your experience enjoyable.

Dear Ms. Wastewise: My mom is diabetic, and while she does a good job of watching what she eats and trying to exercise, she has to check her blood sugar levels twice a day. Since they're so small, is it okay to just throw all those little needles in the trash? – "Pointed Question"

Dear "Pointed Question": Needles and the "lancets" used to check blood sugar levels should **NEVER** be thrown out in the trash. Although the container you use may seem strong and safe, it won't stand up to the heavy equipment used in the waste industry. When machinery hits those containers, they often break, scattering little needles throughout a large pile of trash. Workers have to wear special safety gear to gather all the sharps, to prevent contact with any other employees further down the line. Sharps need to be collected in special red sharps containers, and dropped off at an approved disposal location. The franchised collection companies in North County (Recology Western Oregon), Central County (City Sanitary Service) and South County (Nestucca Valley Sanitary Service) offer sharps disposal for their customers. Or you can bring them to the collection event in Tillamook on October 26th.

For more information, call the Tillamook County Solid Waste Department at 503-815-3975 email recycle@co.tillamook.or.us or see us online at www.tillamook.or.us/gov/solidwaste

