

Disposal of Smoke Detectors

By Richard Ireland Jr.

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This is the time of the year where we are reminded to change the batteries in our smoke detectors. Some of us may consider replacing the smoke detectors altogether. A commonly asked question is “*How do I dispose of my smoke detector?*” and “*Why are smoke detectors not accepted at hazardous waste collections?*” These questions are asked because certain types of detectors contain small amounts of radioactive material.

The two types of detectors are photoelectric and ionization. The photoelectric detectors are better at detecting smoldering fires. They contain no radioactive material and can be thrown away in with the garbage. The ionization detectors are better with flaming fires. Both types have been tested and shown to give sufficient time for occupants to escape most residential fires

The ionization detectors have a small amount of Americium 241, a radioactive material. You can tell if you have an ionization smoke detector by looking on the package, owner’s manual or by calling the manufacturer. Some detectors use both methods and should be treated as a ionization detector.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has exempted all end users of ionization smoke detectors from regulatory requirements for storage, handling and disposal. Since they contain very low levels of radioactivity they can be thrown away in the trash. The best way to dispose of the ionization smoke detectors is to return them to the manufacturers. They are required to dispose of them as radioactive waste since they are not an end user.

Contact the smoke detector manufacturer on their return policies. When sending them back, make sure that they are in a sealed plastic bag and placed in a sturdy cardboard box with shock absorbing material to protect it from damage. Include a note stating that it is being returned for proper disposal. If you send it by U.S. Mail, make sure it sent by surface transportation (parcel post).

We hope that the information that we provide is useful and makes Plainville a safer, healthier and cleaner place to live.



Summertime Green

By the Plainville Recycling & Solid Waste Team

It's summertime again and everyone is planning outdoor activities. One of those favorite activities is working around the yard. Mowing the lawn is job #1 in the yard. Many of us mow our lawns and see how much nicer it looks afterwards. Unfortunately, many of us rake up the clippings afterwards dispose of them with the regular garbage. Not only is it time consuming and a lot of work but it also against the law.

In 1998, the State of Connecticut made it illegal to dispose grass clippings with the regular trash. Trash to energy plants have problems burning the fresh mowed grass. Also, it adds to the cost of trash hauling. A ½ acre lawn can produce up to 260 bags of grass clippings weighing 3 tons.

Grass can be used for fertilizing your lawn and garden. Thatch is no problem since grass is 80% water and decomposed quickly. The only time it should be removed is when it is over ½ inch for healthy lawn maintenance. Clippings can provide nitrogen to your compost pile or used as mulch in gardens. In other words, nature provides you with natural fertilizer for your lawn and garden.

Your lawn mower can be turned into a grass recycler. Removing the grass catcher and buying a special safety plug and adaptor kit from a lawn mower dealer will do the trick. Also, you can buy a mulching blade to put on your mower.

On our web site at www.plainvillect.com/detpages/muniserv250.html you can click on the CT Department of Environmental Protection link for more information on recycling grass clippings and some tips on lawn maintenance.



BAG IT **(PLASTIC BAG RECYCLING)**

by the Plainville Recycling & Solid Waste Commission

One of the trends in shopping today is the use of plastic shopping bags. They are easy to use for shoppers and are affordable for grocery and retail stores to buy. The one problem is that they add to the waste problem.

Studies have shown that it could take as much as 450 – 1,000 years for a plastic bag to decompose. Should they find their way into the marine environment, they do not fully decompose. Particles that are left over can be ingested by fish and find their way up the food chain into humans.

The waste they cause is enormous. San Jose CA for example, sorted out 477 tons in one month. Many cities and even some countries facing similar problems are taking action to curb this problem. Many are placing a per bag surcharge to cover the cost of handling.

Most grocery stores are now addressing this problem. Some are selling cloth shopping bags that can be reused. They also offer bins where customers can drop off used plastic bags to be recycled. A grocery chain in California is offering 3 cents per bag off the grocery bill to customers who use their own bags.

So how can individuals reduce this waste. Use paper bags whenever possible. In Connecticut, grocery stores are required to offer paper or plastic. This is especially important because you cannot only reuse it shopping but you can use it for placing newspapers into for recycling. Recyclers prefer the paper bags because the plastic bags can clog their machinery. Purchasing of reusable cloth shopping bags can reduce waste. If you use plastic bags, be sure to return them to the store to be recycled or to be reused on your next shopping trip.

By following these tips, not only do we help keep our community clean, and we also help it save money.



JUNK THE JUNK MAIL

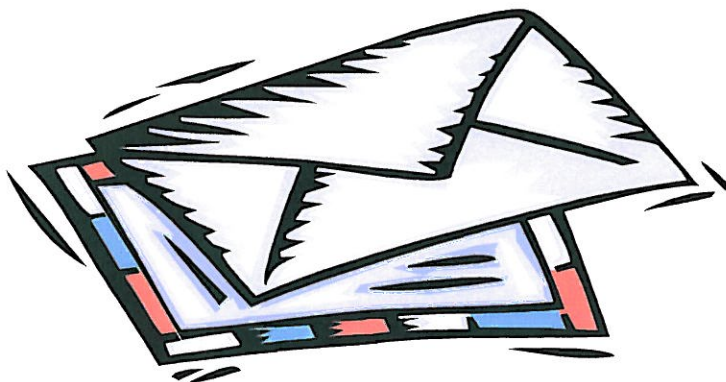
Various environmental groups around the country designated the first week in October as Junk Mail Awareness Week. The purpose of this is to bring attention to fact that junk mail is not only sometimes annoying it is also a waste of natural resources.

Junk mail consists mainly of pre- approved credit offers, advertisements, and other types of solicitations. Mail order catalog firms are another source. Addresses are sometimes sold to these firms by banks; credit reporting agencies and other companies that you may do business with. There are some businesses that specialize in gathering addresses for other companies.

The U.S. Postal Service delivers over 90 billion pieces of junk mail every year. About 44% is thrown away with only half of this is ever being recycled. This adds to our garbage thereby increasing what we pay in tipping fees and hauling fees. By reducing junk mail not only can you reduce recycling tipping fees, but on solid waste fees as well.

There is currently efforts to establish do not mail lists on both the federal level and in a few states. There is something that individuals can do on their own to reduce the amount of junk mail that they receive. They can call 800 numbers that are listed in catalogs and other bulk mailings to be removed from their mailing lists. Also, they can search the Internet for organizations that you can register for free or for a charge.

One such firm is Direct Marketing Association. By registering with them, they put you on a do not mail list. Then they send the list to the major credit reporting agencies such as Experian, Equifax, Innovis, and Trans Union. Your name will be removed from the companies pre-approved mailing list. You can register with them by calling 1-888-567-8688 or online at www.dmaconsumers.org. It will take a couple of months to take effect. Be sure to check out other sites on the Internet concerning junk mail reduction.



CONSTRUCTION & DEMOLITION RECYCLING

By the Plainville Recycling & Solid Waste Commission

With the construction work at the high school and soon at Toffolon school, have you ever wondered what will be done with the material that is torn out from there or any other demolition site for that matter. They are sent to recycling sites that deal in recycling of construction and demolition materials.

When the material arrives, it is emptied out of the truck and then is loaded on a conveyor belt. While on this belt, wood objects are sorted from the rest of the debris according to size. As the conveyor belt moves along, other items are sorted out manually. Metal objects are sorted out to be recycled. Regular garbage such as rugs and items made of cloth are sorted out and sent to trash to energy plants.

Cinder blocks, bricks and rocks once sorted out are crushed and then tested for contamination. Once they are deemed safe, they shipped out by rail to be used as fill.

Larger pieces of wood such as pallets, wood furniture, and such are separated from the debris and sent to a different area. Here they are sent through a powerful magnet to remove any nails. The nails that are removed are valuable because they already have been processed and impurities have been removed. Then they are broken down into smaller pieces. These smaller pieces are used for various products. They are used for wood chips in landscaping applications. Sometimes red or black dye is added for coloring or no dye is added leaving for a natural look. Sawdust from this process is used for stuffing for animal bedding and in sewage treatment plants to thicken the waste.

There are stores that take items from construction sites that are in good condition and resell them to the public.

Recycling has come a long way from just recycling cans, bottles, and newspapers. The construction and demolition industry has learned that recycling can be environmentally and economically beneficial.



TIS THE SEASON TO RECYCLE

By the Plainville Recycling & Solid Waste Commission

The Christmas season is once again approaching. It is a time for gift giving and family gatherings. Unfortunately, the day after it also means that garbage pails will be filled with Christmas wrapping paper and dinner leftovers. We offer some helpful hints on how to reduce waste at Christmas time.

Wrapping paper and packing material comprise most of the waste that is thrown away after Christmas. Cardboard boxes should be saved if possible and reused for future uses. You should consider bringing cardboard boxes and packing foam peanuts to any mail depot that will accept them. Newspapers can be used as wrapping paper especially foreign newspapers, which can add a special look to the present. If you have to use packing foam, use the biodegradable type.

Christmas dinner leftovers can add significantly to your waste. One way is avoid the use of disposal plates, cups, and silverware in favor of reusable ones. Be sure to recycle your bottles, cans and aluminum foil.

Leftovers can be packed in plastic bags and containers for later use by you or given to guests. Using leftovers as part of your composting is a great way of providing fertilizer for lawn and garden. For home baked goods, you should use reusable holiday tins.

These are but a few tips. For more helpful tips you can go to the Recycle Guys web site on Christmas recycling at:

www.p2pays.org/recycleguys/images/seasonal/holiday.htm

or you type Christmas Recycling into any search engine.



Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFL)

By the Plainville Recycling & Solid Waste Commission

The latest trend in energy conservation is called CFL (compact fluorescent lamp). They use less energy than a regular light bulb and can last up to 7 years. The concern that many people have is how to dispose of them once. Another is what to do if one of them breaks.

Since they contain mercury, many household hazardous waste collections will accept them. The mercury they contain is very small. The amount would cover the tip of a ballpoint pen. About 100 CFL's have the same amount as one old style thermometer. The following steps should be used if one should break:

- 1) Open windows and close off room for 15 minutes. Keep people and pets away until clean up is completed. Do not operate any heating/ventilation/ air conditioning during clean up.
- 2) Wearing disposable gloves, carefully pick up the broken pieces. DO NOT use a vacuum cleaner or broom. Use cardboard to scoop the glass.
- 3) Use the sticky side of duct tape or any tape to pick up any fine particles. Use a damp cloth to clean up the area.
- 4) Afterwards, place the items that were used into a sealed bag. Then place the bag with the regular trash outside the house. You can go to www.ct.gov/dep for more instructions on clean up on carpeted surfaces.

The symbol hg will appear on packaging of CFL and linear fluorescent light bulbs. This is the symbol for mercury. When bringing your bulbs to a hazardous waste collection, be sure to package them so that they do not break.

By following these suggestions, you can enjoy the benefits of these energy saving light bulbs.

