Universal Waste Made Simple

The buzz around town is universal ... Universal Waste that is. Although the discussion seems new, law makers have been crafting legislation and the Kern County Waste Management Department (KCWMD) has been developing programs to help residents handle Universal Waste safely and easily.

What are Universal Wastes?

Not to be confused with Universal Collection, a term used for the mandatory curbside collection of household trash; Universal Wastes are hazardous wastes, generated by residents and businesses, which are more common and pose a lower risk to people and the environment than other hazardous wastes. (Hazardous wastes contain harmful chemicals which, if put in your garbage can, may harm people or the environment.)

Federal and State regulations identify Universal Wastes and provide simple rules for handling and recycling of them. The regulations, called the "Universal Waste Rule", allow KCWMD to manage these types of waste with less restrictions.

Virtually every resident and business produces Universal Waste and therefore must comply with these regulations. Compliance is actually pretty simple. Households must take these wastes to a household hazardous waste facility or an approved recycling facility.

Universal Wastes include:

- Fluorescent tubes, bulbs and other mercury-containing lamps. Because these lights contain mercury, a toxic metal known to cause nerve damage and birth defects, they must be recycled or disposed of properly. The release of mercury into the environment can cause air and water pollution.
- Mercury Thermostats and Thermometers These items also contain mercury, a shiny silver liquid metal. Modern electronic thermostats do not contain mercury.

Automotive batteries, although hazardous, are not Universal Waste and must be brought to a permanent household hazardous waste facility.

Non-empty Aerosol Cans. If your aerosol can is labeled with words like TOXIC or FLAMMABLE, don't put it in the trash unless it is completely empty. (Note: Aerosol cans with non-working spray mechanisms are not considered empty unless the entire contents have been used prior to the mechanism failure. These units must be recycled at a Special Waste Facility or Household Hazardous Waste special collection event.)

Electronic Devices. Televisions and computer monitors, computers, printers, VCR's, cell phones, telephones, radios, and microwave ovens often contain heavy metals like lead, cadmium, copper and chromium. (Please see "Monitoring Electronic Waste", on page 2, for recycling/disposal options.)

Mercury Gauges and Mercury-added Novelties. Some gauges such as barometers, blood pressure and vacuum gauges contain mercury. Flashing athletic shoes, jewelry, games, greetings cards that play music and other devices are examples of novelties with added mercury.

Electrical Switches and Relays. Mercury switches can be found in some chest freezers, pre-1972 washing machines, sump pumps, electric space heaters and clothes irons.

Where can I take my Universal Waste?

In Kern County, Universal Waste is accepted at the Kern County Special Waste Facility in Bakersfield, the Special Waste Facility at the Mojave Airport in Mojave and at the Household Hazardous Waste one-day collection events in Lebec, Kern Valley, Tehachapi and Ridgecrest.

Universal Waste found in large appliances, like refrigerators or washing machines, can be recycled through the Curbside Large Item Collection program; at a Bulky Waste Collection Event, or at a County Disposal Site.

For more information on managing Universal Waste contact the Kern County Special Waste Facility at 661-862-8922 or 1-800-552- KERN, option 6.
Beyond the rolling hills and picturesque farm fields of our valley communities; behind the pines and the oaks of our mountain towns; around the corner from the Joshua trees in the high desert lies a dirty little secret: **ILLEGALLY DUMPED TIRES.**

A problem statewide, illegally dumped tires not only scar the landscape but pose health and safety concerns as effective breeding grounds for disease-carrying insects and habitat to snakes and rodents. Piles of tires also create clean-up challenges - spawning costs to taxpayers in the hundreds of thousands, statewide, each year.

The Kern County Board of Supervisors has chosen to be proactive in the mitigation and prevention of illegally dumped tires. To that end, county departments have initiated a variety of programs tackling the issue. Volunteered-centered small site clean-ups; tire vouchers and amnesty days; farm field clean-up events; and grant sponsored mega-site site programs have yielded thousands of tires in the last five years.

The Environmental Health Department has also tightened up enforcement on tire dealers - requiring disposal plans and mandatory inspections as terms of operation.

But while clean-up and enforcement activities are important for the vitality of our county, the Waste Management Department is attacking the problem on the front-end with a **FREE TIRE DISPOSAL PILOT PROGRAM.**

The program, effective July 20, 2006, is another tool to battle illegally dumped tires.

The criteria is simple: **UP TO 4 LIGHT DUTY TIRES,** from residential properties only, will be accepted at **NO COST ONCE PER YEAR.** To qualify, the rims must be 18" or smaller and tires must be separated in the load. Residents must be able to show proof of residency and may bring tires to any Kern County Landfill.

The program **DOES NOT APPLY** to loads required to comply with State manifesting requirements nor to loads from nonresidential properties such as commercial, agricultural or industrial sources.

According to Daphne Harley, WMD Director, "The pilot program addresses the excuse of disposal cost being a barrier to proper disposal. By allowing residents to bring in four tires, free of charge, we take away a reason for illegally dumping them. Whether we get ten or ten thousand, if any of them might have been illegally dumped in a gully or farm field; we have made a difference ... that's what counts."

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Illegally dumped tires on Cottonwood Road - south of Bakersfield.

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**For Your Information**

**Local Landfill Locations & Hours:**

**Bena Landfill**
17 miles east of Bakersfield, off Hwy. 58, at Tower Line Road
Open Daily: 8 am to 4 pm

**Borion Landfill**
1/2 mile south of Borion, at 11400 Boron Avenue
Open: Sun, Mon, Tues & Thurs: 12 pm to 4 pm
Sat: 8 am to 4 pm
Closed: Wednesday and Friday

**Mojave-Rosamond Landfill**
5 miles south of Mojave, 1 mile east of Hwy. 14, at 400 Silver Queen Road
Open: Sun, Wed and Fri: 8 am to noon
Mon and Sat: 8 am to 4 pm
Closed: Tues and Thurs

**Ridgecrest Landfill**
5 miles southwest of Ridgecrest, 3301 Bowman Road
Open Daily: 8 am to 4 pm

**Shafter-Wasco Landfill**
8 miles west of Shafter, off Lerdo Hwy.
1 mile north of Scofield Ave at 16721 Scofield Ave
Open Daily: Mon - Sat: 8 am to 4 pm

**Taft Landfill**
4 miles north of Taft, 1 mile north of Hwy. 119, at 13351 Elk Hills Rd.
Open: Sun, Mon, Wed, Fri and Sat
Sun: noon to 4 pm
Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat: 8 am to 4 pm
Closed: Tues and Thurs

**Tehachapi Landfill**
12001 Tehachapi Blvd., Tehachapi
Open: Sun, Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat
Mon, Wed, Fri and Sat: 8 am to 4 pm
Sun: 8 am to 12 pm
Closed: Tues and Thurs

**Kern County Special Waste Facilities:**

**Metro Bakersfield Facility**
4951 Standard Street, Bakersfield
Thursday - Saturday
8AM until 4 PM

**Mojave Facility**
17035 Finnin Street at the Mojave Airport
1st Saturday of every month
9:00 Am until NOON

**NOTE: All county sites are closed on the following holidays:**
New Year’s Day, Easter Sunday, 4th of July, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.
Don't get stuck with Sharps

Improper disposal of used sharps (needles, syringes and lancets) can injure children, home health care providers, pets and sanitation workers. The Kern County Waste Management Department has a safe solution for your sticky problem.

Free "BIOHAZARD" rigid plastic sharps containers are available at the Special Waste Facility at 4951 Standard Street in Bakersfield and at the East Kern Special Waste Facility, 17035 Finnin Street in Mojave (at the Mojave Airport).

The containers are specifically designed for ease and safety of disposal. When the container is full, residents can bring it back to the Special Waste Facility for proper and convenient disposal. Sharps will NOT BE ACCEPTED in liquid bleach or detergent bottles, coffee cans, milk jugs, glass containers or soda bottles. The program is for home-generated sharps only - no businesses.

For more information call the Kern County Special Waste Facility at (661) 862-8922.

It's a Trash Jungle out There!

With so many changing disposal mandates impacting the way we handle garbage, the trash jungle is more complex than ever. What to do with televisions, large items and used motor oil has evolved through time. During the Kern County Fair, the Waste Management Department, partnered with Community Clean Sweep, will construct a jungle gym - out of trash.

The display, a public education effort for WMD, is designed to help residents navigate the trash jungle. Nestled in front of the entrance to Goode Auditorium, kids will delight in spending time in the "jungle" as trained safari guides teach you the proper way to get rid of trash. Kids, 12 and under, can even enter to win a hand-crafted treasure chest, perfectly sized for a bedroom toy chest.

The Kern County Fair is open Wednesday, September 20th through Sunday, October 1st. Join the safari and leave as King (or Queen) of the Trash Jungle!

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Most folks, over the age of forty, remember when trash was ... just trash. Some of us hauled our own garbage; others had it picked up and taken to a local dump where it was either buried or burned. After the 2nd World War, most Americans didn't give much thought to garbage as we moved into an era of plenty.

Much has changed since the fifties and sixties. We have come to realize that, the natural resources used to make paper, glass, metal and plastic products, is exhaustible. We have gained an understanding regarding the impact of solid and liquid waste on ground water tables and soil contamination. We have done extensive research into effective landfill technology and have made great strides in reducing, reusing and recycling materials from our waste stream.

The business of trash has exploded in the 21st Century. In addition to the trash haulers and landfill attendants of yesteryear, we have biologists, geologists, chemists and engineers. Our staff works with private contractors, politicians and concerned citizens. We rethink how to dispose of waste based on laboratory studies and the subsequent science - what we did five years ago is often different from how we will handle that same piece of trash today.

In each issue of Waste Watch, we attempt to share (and make understandable) the newest waste disposal mandates required of the Waste Management Department (WMD) by State law. Today, the newest segment of the waste stream is called Universal Waste. This category joins its predecessors Electronic Waste, Household Hazardous Waste, Biohazardous Waste, Green Waste, Construction Waste and Municipal Waste. Each waste segment must be handled carefully and, often, at a different location using different technology. The result is a general population who is often confused about what to do with their trash.

A primary objective for the Waste Management Department is to mitigate that confusion. To that end, we use a variety of tools to share information - mass media (including radio, television and newspaper), bilingual publications, Waste Watch Newsletters, community involvement, a WMD Informational Hotline, a Recycling and Disposal Guide printed in the AT&T Yellow Pages Telephone Book and department speakers for local public service and community groups. We also seek to develop programs that are both cost-effective and convenient for county residents.

Although we are obligated to be effective responders to the ever-changing mandates of garbage, we remain committed to helping all local residents understand what a change in Sacramento means here at home.
Kern County Oil Recycling Program

Used motor oil is accepted, for recycling, at more than 75 Certified Oil Recycling Centers throughout Kern County and at most Kern County Disposal Sites.

So, if you change your own motor oil at home ... **JUST DO IT!**

For a location near you: www.ciwmb.ca.gov/UsedOil/CrtCntrs.asp

**RECYCLE!**

For more information, contact the Kern County Waste Management Department at (661) 862-8900, OPTION 6.

Contact Us:

Kern County Recycling Hotline (661) 862-8979

Kern County Waste Management Department:
Local (661) 862–8900
Toll-free (800) 552–KERN (option 6)
TTY – ready (800) 735–2929
Web site: www.co.kern.ca.us/wmd

City of Bakersfield Solid Waste Division
Local (661) 326–3114
(Mount Vernon Green Waste Facility & Metro Bakersfield Drop-Off Recycling Centers)
Web site www.ci.bakersfield.ca.us

California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB)
Sacramento (916) 341–6300
Web site www.ciwmb.ca.gov

California Materials & Exchange (Cal-MAX)
(877) 520–9703
Web site www.ciwmb.ca.gov/calmax