

A Quarterly Newsletter Of



Solid Waste District of  
LaPorte County

(219) 326-0014  
(800) 483-7700

www.solidwastedistrict.com

Fall 2005



## Safe disposal for "sharps"

By Paulette Schuster

Many people use needles and syringes as part of their medical care at home. Proper disposal is an important safety issue not only for the user, but also for employees who work with the disposal of sharps.

In the past, the Solid Waste District of LaPorte County has supplied containers for disposal of sharps; however, these containers were a very costly part of the program. We are now REUSING thick-walled plastic bottles (such as empty bleach, detergent, and fabric softener bottles) and turning them into sharps containers. You may pick up a container at our office, or you may pick up labels to put on your own empty, reusable, thick plastic containers.



**Instead of purchasing expensive sharps containers, we are now creating our own with empty, used plastic bottles. Any thick-walled, puncture-proof plastic bottle with a screw-on cap could become a sharps container.**

Please use a plastic bottle that is leak-proof, shatter-proof, and puncture-proof. When the container is full, screw the lid on tightly and drop off the container at our next Household Hazardous Waste Collection for proper disposal.

**Never put sharps in your recycling bin or your trash!**

## Making lighter work of fall leaves

The leaves are beginning to change colors, showing off bright yellows, oranges, and reds. Enjoy! Before long, those leaves will be brown and spread over the ground.

Now is a great time to think about the ways that you can reuse fall leaves in your own yard. Here are our suggestions:

- Shred the leaves with a mulching mower (or a mower with the bagger removed) and let them stay on the grass. These shredded leaves will provide a protective winter cover and decompose by spring. If you have a lot of leaves, you'll need to mow often during the weeks with the heaviest leaf-fall.
- Pick up leaves with your bagging mower. The mower will shred the leaves as it picks them up, creating a great mulch. Use the leaf mulch in your gardens or flower beds.
- Add shredded or whole leaves to your compost pile. Shredded leaves will decompose faster, but whole leaves will also break down into nutrient-rich compost. Mixing fall leaves with over-ripe fruit and vegetables and grass clippings will help the material decompose more quickly.



- Don't burn your fall leaves! Leaf burning releases many pollutants into the air. Smoke from just 5 pounds of burning leaves creates a full pound of pollution. Leaf burning can create health hazards for children, the elderly, and people with breathing difficulties. Burning can also put nearby properties at risk.

## Last chance for 2005

### Final mobile collection for household hazardous waste set for October 15th

Our final mobile household hazardous waste collection will be held from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, October 15 at the LaPorte County Fairgrounds. Household hazardous waste will be accepted only during these hours.

You and your family will be able to drop off a variety of household products, such as cleaners, automotive fluids, oil-based paints and stains, pesticides, waste fuels, and mercury-containing items.

Because of the chemicals they contain, these products cannot be disposed with household trash.

Remember—latex paint is NOT hazardous, so it cannot be dropped off at these mobile collections. Dry it out, remove the lid from the can, and place it with your household trash for disposal.

For details, call Tom Buford at 1-800-946-4449 or 219-326-1425.



## What else can I do with fall leaves?

The Solid Waste District of LaPorte County's Yard Waste Drop-off Site is located at the north end of Zigler Road, just past the grandstands on the west side. (Zigler Road runs along the east side of the LaPorte County Fairgrounds.) The site is open during daylight hours, seven days a week.

You can drop off leaves, as well as grass clippings, yard trimmings, branches, brush, chipped wood, and clean, non-treated lumber. You may drop off materials in special kraft paper leaf bags, which may be purchased at local grocery and hardware stores. You must unload your own material at the site.

If material is transported to the site in plastic bags, the plastic bags MUST BE emptied. You MUST take your plastic bags away from the site.

The leaves are composted, and the compost is available for pick-up by residents. For details about compost pick-up, turn to "What's Up?" on the back page.

## Tire & White Goods Recycling Program set for October

Residents will be able to drop off **tires and white goods (large appliances)** for recycling on Saturday, October 15 at the LaPorte County Fairgrounds from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Gates close at 2 p.m. and rules are strictly enforced.

There is no charge to drop off up to 10 tires of any size and large appliances, such as washers, dryers, stoves, refrigerators, air conditioners, freezers, humidifiers, and water heaters. Freon will be extracted from refrigerant appliances at no charge.

Any tire load over 10 tires requires a call to Susan at the office (219-326-0014 or 1-800-483-7700). You will be added to our list. Those NOT on list will be turned away on the day of the collection. In addition, driver's license and vehicle registration must be presented to the officer at the collection prior to dropping off tires.

The District reserves the right to refuse any loads. This drop-off event is for residents ONLY. No businesses or industries may drop off items.



# 10 Tips for Reuse

Here are some easy ways to increase your reuse of items. By reusing, you'll reduce your waste and use both your personal resources and our natural resources more wisely.



1. Use the library. Your local library is a treasure trove of books, videos, CDs, magazines, and much more. Why buy what you and your fellow taxpayers have already paid for? Be a borrower! If you are looking for something the library doesn't have, ask a librarian to help you arrange for an "inter-library loan." This allows your library to borrow the item from another library and then loan it out to you. Don't forget college and university libraries. Often all you need to borrow materials from these libraries is a valid in-state driver's license. Check their websites or call for details.
2. Have you ever watched people go in and out of the library? If so, you know that library regulars are "bag people." The vast majority of people coming in and out of the library are carrying canvas bags, backpacks, or totes. Become a bag person. Carry your own bags—and not just to and from the library. They are great for small purchases when you are running errands.
3. Become a renter. No, you don't need to sell your house and move! We're talking about renting things that you don't need to own, such as new release movies, a lawn edger, or a party tent. If you don't want to worry about buying, maintaining, and storing something that you need now but only need to use once or twice, rent it!
4. Borrow items that you need, loan what you have, or share seldom-used equipment with friends and family members. This is much like renting—you get what you need now—but it is cheaper, of course. Need a crib for a short period of time while a young child visits? Borrow one from a neighbor who has one in the attic. Enjoying a great new game? Loan it to a friend after you've played it several times. Do you and your best friend share a hobby? Then, share a magazine subscription, too. Maybe you could each order a different magazine on the topic and trade them each month.
5. Avoid "use & toss" products. Use and toss products include disposable "wipes" for house cleaning, hand wiping, and more. You might think that a few wipes here or there don't mean much. But by 2008, \$3.1 billion worth of disposable wipes, weighing more than 100,000 tons, will be sold each year. In most of the situations where wipes are being used, rags, washable cleaning cloths or sponges, or washcloths and towels would be just as easy to use and more environmentally friendly. Think before you buy wipes. Wipes are handy on-the-go (in the car or at a soccer game). However, if you are at home cleaning the kitchen or bathroom, reusable rags are your best bet—plus, you have more control over the type and amount of cleaning products that you use.
6. Create a "fun box." Old crayons and markers (the ones that have long since lost their own boxes), sheets of stickers with most of the stickers used, scraps of fabric from a second-grade science project, and more can go into your family "fun box." Keep your scraps together so that when you want or need craft supplies, you can hit your fun box rather than head to the mall.
7. Wrap it up! Empty shoe boxes wrapped in reused wrapping paper, calendar pages, old photo collages, or magazine pages make decorative and useful storage boxes. Gift-giving time? Make a basket or lunch box part of the gift and you've created a gift and wrapper in one. Use paper or fabric gift bags. Wrap gifts in reused newspaper, wallpaper scraps, or other "recovered" materials. To see more gift wrapping ideas, visit [www.boakart.com/wrap/WrapArt.html](http://www.boakart.com/wrap/WrapArt.html).
8. Remember "hand-me-downs"? Used clothes, which are now sometimes called "pre-worn" clothes, often have a lot of life left in them. If you are cleaning out your closet, don't head for the trash. Instead, pass the clothes along to a friend or family member who will wear them, sell them at a garage sale or to a reuse shop, or donate them to a charity. If you are looking for clothes, shop reused first. Secondhand stores are full of fantastic finds and durable duds.
9. Fix 'er up! When you repair what you already have, you usually save money and always ensure that the things in which you have already invested last longer. For instance, a home computer can be a large investment. If the DVD drive quits working, it is a simple (and inexpensive) fix to get it up and running again. *Voilà*—like new! Shoes are another good example. Each year, about 62 million pairs of sturdy shoes and boots are repaired.
10. Maintain what you have. Maintenance may not seem to be related to reuse, but it is. The better care that you give to durable items, from home appliances to tires, the longer they will last. Follow manufacturer's recommended guidelines for the use and care of things you buy. You'll be able to use and reuse your own stuff for much longer!



## The long and rewinding road

Are you a frequent traveler? Whether you are flying or driving, you can read, enjoy, and reuse!

At about 60 airports across the country, travelers can purchase a book from one of Paradies Shops' 200 participating stores and return it along with the original receipt for a partial refund to any of the participating Paradies stores within six months. That means you could pick up the book at the Reno airport, read it while you're traveling in New York, and return it to the Albany airport before your return flight.

When you return the book, you'll be refunded half of the original price. (You must have your receipt, but when you buy the book, the clerk will either tape it into the book or staple it to a free bookmark.) Your book will in turn be sold as a "pre-read" book. Only pre-read books in good condition are sold; however, the company reports that almost all of the returned books are in resalable condition. Those that are not are donated to local charities.

Paradies Shops' stores operate under several different names. The next time you travel and are purchasing a book, ask whether the store participates in the Paradies "Read and Return" program. If it does, read, enjoy, and return!

Not flying? You can still "read" and return through the "Books-on-Audio" program at Cracker Barrel Old Country Stores, which dot the landscape at interstate exits throughout the U.S. You buy the audiobook on cassette tape or CD at the list price and enjoy it as you travel. Prices range from \$9.99 to \$48. When you are done, you stop by another Cracker Barrel Old Country Store and return it. You'll be refunded the purchase price minus a rental fee of \$3.49 per week. Just as with the Paradies Read and Return program, you can buy the book at one Cracker Barrel

Old Country Store and return it to another in a different city or state. So read and reuse!

## QUOTES REQUOTED

We are aware that our children and the future generations have a right to a world which will also need energy, should be free of pollution, should be rich with biological diversity and should have a climate which will sustain all forms of life.

Wangari Maathai, Winner of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize

In 1977, Wangari Maathai founded the "Green Belt Movement," which has helped African women plant 30 million trees, providing fuel, food, shelter, and income to support their families.



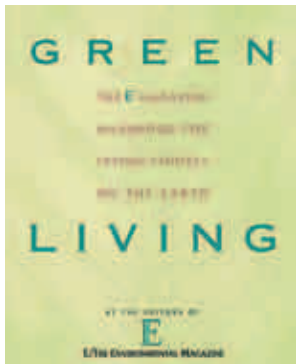
Photo credit: Martin Rowe



# Living more lightly

*E Magazine* recently published *Green Living*, a handbook for living lightly on the earth. From food and health care to personal care and clothing, from gardening to eco-travel, this guidebook is designed to help you make informed choices.

Each of its 14 chapters explains the contents and effects of products that are commonly used, outlines alternatives, and provides a long list of resources. For instance, Chapter 9, "Kids' Stuff: Starting Them Young, from the Nursery to the Bookshelf," explores topics including the impact of various types of media on children and toxins often found in the home. Then, a



"what you can do" section describes simple steps that can make a positive difference on children's lifestyles and health. Finally, an eight-page resource section shows you where to find products, information, and more.

Look for *Green Living: The E Magazine Handbook for Living Lightly on the Earth* (Plume, 2005) at your library or bookstore. Remember—check the used bookstore first!

If you enjoy this book, you might also look for *The Newman's Own Organics Guide to a Good Life: Simple Measures That Benefit You and the Place You Live* by Nell Newman (Villard, 2003).

## When is bulk packaging right for you?

Buying in bulk can reduce the amount of packaging waste that you throw away or recycle. Often buying in bulk (buying a large container with multiple servings or multiple items) is also cheaper on a per-unit basis. However, is buying in bulk always the best choice? That depends. Before you buy in bulk, consider what you need and how you will use the product.

Buying a huge container of something you are sure to use and which won't "go bad" is almost always your best bet. For example, laundry detergent doesn't spoil and will still be useful in six months, so pick up the larger container.

Choosing the super-size jug of milk is a good idea if you have a large family and will consume the milk before it

spoil. If you have only two people in your household and don't use much milk, a small bottle or even powdered milk might be a better option. In other words, think about the potential product waste, especially when looking at perishable food and beverages.

The huge container also may not be the best choice when you are buying hazardous products. Will you use up the product you are buying? Or will you end up disposing of it at a hazardous waste collection? If you aren't sure, buy the smaller container.

As you shop, look for containers that are the right size for your family and your needs, while creating the least amount of waste possible.



## Bulk buy your water

"Tap water" costs many times less per gallon than bottled water. In fact, a gallon of municipal tap water costs a penny or less in most places, while the same amount of water in individual, single-serve bottles may cost \$10. Rather than buying expensive, pre-filled bottles that you carry home and then need to recycle, purchase water "in bulk" by using your own tap water. You can fill reusable bottles. Be sure to wash them thoroughly between uses.

Read more about drinking water in *Plain Talk About Drinking Water: Questions and Answers About the Water You Drink* by Dr. James M. Symons (American Water Works Association, 2001).



## Gas prices got you down?

Fuel prices, which have shot up this year, are affecting everything from weekend trips to car sales to home heating and air conditioning costs. With prices high and no relief in sight, consider ways to reduce your use of fossil fuels. When you reduce your use, you save money, cut harmful emissions, and eliminate waste (some of which is hazardous). Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Turn off lights and appliances when they aren't in use. While your refrigerator does need to run all the time, your TV doesn't.
- Plan your errands to reduce the number of trips you make, as well as to eliminate unnecessary "backtracking."
- Walk or bike instead of driving. You can improve your health, lower your fuel use, and cut down on pollution.
- Buying a new vehicle? Consider a hybrid. Hybrids, which draw part of their power from a battery, reduce your use of gasoline and have lower emissions. Unlike older electric vehicles, hybrids do not have to be plugged in. The gasoline engine and energy recaptured during braking recharge the battery during use.
- Choose alternative fuels, when available. Ethanol is a mixture of gasoline and a crop such as corn or a crop waste such as corn stalks or sugar can stalks. Biodiesel is a mixture of diesel fuel and vegetable oil. These fuels reduce your use of non-renewable resources and may increase your use of a recaptured waste product.
- Talk to your electric utility provider about "green energy" from renewable sources, including wind and solar power. Find out how much of your utility's electricity comes from renewable sources.
- Rake your leaves or sweep your driveway instead of using a leaf blower. A gas-powered leaf blower used once a month for half an hour emits as much pollution as a car driven more than 175 miles. Also, when you use the rake or broom, there is no chance of spilling or needing to dispose of hazardous gas or oil.
- Insulate around doors and windows to eliminate heating and cooling losses. If you can feel air blowing in, you need to insulate. An old, rolled towel can keep your valuable heated or cooled air from escaping around doors.

Look for more energy-reducing tips at these U.S. Department of Energy websites: [www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov) (click on "Energy Saving Tips") or [www.EnergyHog.org](http://www.EnergyHog.org).







Homeowners may now pick up compost and mulch at our Westville Facility. Mulch is \$6.50 per cubic yard, and compost is \$10.50 per cubic yard. Colored mulch is NOT available for sale. We also offer animal bedding at \$6.50 per cubic yard.

We haven't forgotten our businesses either. Businesses can buy mulch and compost from us at the Westville Facility, as well as doing their tipping (organic waste drop-off). If small items are being dropped off, such as brush, leaves, grass, and/or trees UNDER 30" diameter, the tipping fee is \$5.50 per cubic yard. For larger items, such as trees OVER 30" diameter and CLEAN stumps, the tipping fee is \$7.90 per cubic yard.

Our Facility hours are:

- Spring/Summer/Fall — Monday through Friday, 8:15 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- April through October ONLY — every Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- Winter — Monday through Friday, 8:15 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For additional information, call the facility at 219-785-2511, extension #4935 (you must use the # sign), and ask for Joe.



**We want your suggestions, questions and comments!**

We are also available to speak to your club or organization about solid waste, waste reduction, recycling and composting.

**Solid Waste District of  
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**PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER  
70% POST-CONSUMER NEWS  
CONTENT, USING SOY INKS**

# America Recycles — Do You?

For nearly a decade, Americans have been reminded each fall that recycling is a great habit! Recycling includes collecting used products, as well as making these products into brand-new items. When we recycle, we use our natural resources more wisely, we reduce the amount of pollution that we create, and we save energy. These are all good things!

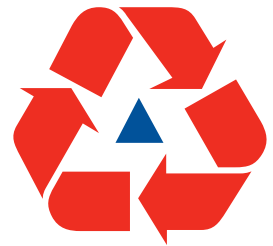
Recycling has three parts—two of which depend on you. First, you need to collect your recyclables. Second, a factory needs to use recyclables to make new products. Third, you must buy things you need that are made from recyclables. Lots of products can be made from your

recyclables, such as fleece fabric, carpet, glass tile, furniture, appliances, cans, jars, bicycles, newspaper, boxes, and paper, to name just a few!

If you already recycle at home, at work, and at school, thanks—keep up the good work! If you recycle sometimes and in some places, commit to recycling more items, more often. If you don't recycle, now is a great time to start.

If you need information about our recycling program, call us at 219-326-0014 or 1-800-483-7700, or visit our website, [www.solidwastedistrict.com](http://www.solidwastedistrict.com).

To learn more about why recycling is such a great thing, visit [www.AmericaRecyclesDay.org](http://www.AmericaRecyclesDay.org). At this



**AMERICA  
RECYCLES**

website, you can enter to win a national prize drawing when you commit to increase your recycling efforts during the coming year.

## Lighting up your life

Lighting consumes about 34 percent of U.S. electricity and uses about 15 percent of the average household's electricity. Americans could cut their electricity use for lighting in half by switching their most often-used incandescent bulbs to compact fluorescent bulbs.

Compact fluorescents also reduce your waste because they last up to 10 times as long. This will reduce the number of bulbs that you buy and ultimately dispose. Plus, it eliminates a great deal of packaging waste and maybe even a store bag or two.

Here are some tips to reduce your electricity use for lighting:

- Turn off lights when you leave the room.

- Use low-wattage and/or compact fluorescent bulbs in lights commonly left on for security or safety.
- Replace burned-out bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs.
- Open the curtains and take advantage of daylight whenever possible.
- Depend on lamps for task lighting rather than lighting up the whole room.

Fluorescent lamps and bulbs of all types contain some mercury. As a result, they should all be handled with care. We accept fluorescent tubes and compact fluorescent bulbs at our mobile Household Hazardous Waste collections (see the front page for details about the upcoming collection).

## Let's eat out

The way Americans eat has changed. Today, nearly half of all money spent on food is not spent at supermarkets, corner grocery stores, convenience stores, or roadside stands. Instead, it is being spent at restaurants. In fact, Americans are spending about \$1.2 billion per day at restaurants.

This money goes to local family diners, fast service chains, and national and regional chains of sit-down restaurants. The quantity and type of waste generated by each of these varies.

Local family-owned restaurants waste the least amount of food back in the kitchen—with only 4 percent of this going to waste. At large national chains, food preparation waste runs about 6 to 7 percent. There is the most variability in the food preparation waste among smaller, regional chains, with losses as high as 40 percent in some restaurants studied.

However, food waste from the preparation areas is only one component. Also in the kitchen, restaurants deal with packaging much like the packaging you deal with in your own kitchen—only bigger. This includes plastic bottles and jugs, steel cans, foil, plastic wrap, cardboard, and paperboard. Many restaurants that don't recycle anything else do capture their cardboard for recycling, since it is easy to break down, easy to store, and more valuable.



And, of course, once the food leaves the kitchen, there are more kinds of waste. One of these is "plate waste," which includes uneaten food and garnishes. Depending on the restaurant, paper and plastic products, such as napkins, cups, forks and spoons, plates, bowls, and wrappers, might constitute the largest volume of dining room waste.

With so many different waste streams and space limitations inside and outside their buildings, restaurants face unique waste reduction and recycling challenges. Across the country, more restaurants each year are composting food scraps, recycling containers, and reducing dining room paper waste.

The next time you eat out—and it will probably be soon, judging from the numbers—do what you can to help the restaurant reduce waste. Order what you will be able to eat or take home for later. If you anticipate leftovers, bring your own reusable containers with you.



## Recycling reminders

### See you every other week!

Curbside collection is scheduled every other week. If you lose track of your recycling week, simply visit our website. Not only can you find your week, but you can schedule regular e-mail reminders so that you won't forget in the future.

### Bin in sight!

On your recycling day, be sure that your red or blue recycling bin is clearly visible from the street. Your bin signals the driver to stop. Remember—no bin, no pickup.

### Out on time!

On your collection day, have your recyclables at the curb by 6 a.m. Don't guess when the truck will come by—just get your bin to the curb by 6 a.m.!

### Recycle this!

- Glass food jars, juice, pop, soda, and water bottles, beer and wine bottles
- "Tin" (steel) food cans, aluminum beverage cans, and bi-metal cans
- All plastics with the chasing-arrows recycling symbol and marked with a number code (#1–#7)
- Newspapers plus any inserts, tabloids, or small flyers that originally came with the paper
- Glossy catalogs
- Phone books
- Magazines
- Cardboard boxes torn down in 2-inch strips
- Stationery and copy paper
- Cereal and snack boxes