

Four R's for a Better Environment

Reduce

Your actions can stop waste before it starts. Think about the environmental impacts of a product and its packaging before you make a purchase. Consider these suggestions:

- Purchase items in refillable containers. There are numerous outlets throughout Alameda County that offer products in refillables. Call the Recycling Hotline at (510) 639-2498 for locations.
- Buy in bulk whenever possible. If refillables are unavailable, choose products that are packaged in recyclable materials or better yet, not packaged at all.
- Bring a cloth bag or a back pack when you go shopping. The answer to the famous question of paper or plastic? is "I brought my own bag!"
- Avoid disposable or "single-use" products such as disposable razors, pens, lighters, plastic utensils, or batteries.
- When hosting a party use durable, reusable items such as cloth napkins or rigid plastic trays/plates instead of paper plates and napkins. If it is a potluck, ask your guests to bring their own plates, cloth napkins, utensils and glasses.
- Rent items that you rarely use, such as power tools and motorized yard equipment. Some public libraries also have tools available for checkout.
- Eliminate unwanted mail. For information on ways to reduce unwanted mail, see the section on Smart Mail on page 11.

Reuse

There are numerous ways you, or others, can extend the life of products and packaging. Here are a few ideas:

- Patronize and donate items to thrift stores.
- Reuse food containers for storage.
- Reupholster, refinish or donate furniture.
- Turn old office paper into note pads or print rough drafts on the back side of used paper.
- When considering the purchase of a product, determine if it is repairable or is designed to be thrown out when it malfunctions. Buying a quality product the first time may actually save you money.

To locate materials needed for your business or to advertise items available for donation or sale, see the California Materials Exchange program (CAL-MAX) on page 10.

Recycle

Gather materials you know can be recycled in an effort to save money, natural resources and landfill space. The following ideas may be helpful:

- Properly prepare your recyclables. Follow the directions your recycling service provider offers.
- Sort recyclables by material type. Look for codes at the bottom of plastic containers to sort by type. Sort paper by the recycling service provider's requirements.
- Do "the Stomp"— step (stomp) on plastic, aluminum and steel containers to reduce their size before placing these containers in your recycling bin. This will save space on recycling vehicles and make collection routes more efficient and cost effective.
- Seek out locations that accept hard-to-recycle materials like used motor oil, plastics or scrap metal.
- Recycling involves the collection, separation and remanufacturing of materials. Recycling isn't complete until previously used materials are made into new products and then purchased as a recycled content product.

Rot

Most of the organics generated at home can easily be recycled by composting. Whether you live in a house, apartment, condominium or mobile home, there are simple, easy and fun ways you can compost your yard trimmings and kitchen scraps.

- Set up a compost bin to compost yard trimmings.
- Construct a worm box to recycle your kitchen scraps into a rich, valuable plant food.
- Attend a free workshop on composting.

For more information on home composting, see page 9 or call the composting information "Rotline" at 510-444-SOIL.

DON'T FORGET TO BUY RECYCLED The materials you place in your curbside or office recycling bins are used to make recycled products. In order to complete the recycling loop or "cycle", consumers must buy recycled products. Let's "Close the Loop"— call the Recycling Hotline at (510) 639-2498 for information on where and how to buy recycled products. And, most important of all, remember...***if you aren't buying recycled, you aren't recycling!***