

# Sustainability Update

## Recycling & Waste Newsletter for County of San Diego Customers



Sustainability in Action

WINTER 2024

RepublicServices.com/SanDiegoCountyCA 619.421.9400

## What Is Happening to My Food Scraps and Yard Trimmings?



Why is California suddenly recycling food scraps? Why do I need to pay for a green cart or dumpster now? Why can't I just throw my food scraps into the trash anymore?

We hear these questions often, so we want to help you understand why communities across California are making these changes.

Recycling organic materials, including food scraps, food-soiled paper, nonhazardous wood and yard trimmings, keeps these materials

out of landfills. In landfills, organic materials decompose, creating a greenhouse gas called methane. In our air, methane is considered a super-pollutant because it is as much as 84 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Landfills are the third-largest source of methane in California, so reducing organics disposal in landfills positively affects air quality and climate change.

It's all happening now because of a California law passed in 2016, called Senate Bill (SB) 1383. This bill kicked off a statewide effort to reduce methane emissions by reducing organic waste disposal in landfills by 75% by 2025. It tackles this in two ways:

1. All residents and businesses in California are now required to separate organic materials (food scraps, food-soiled paper, nonhazardous wood and yard trimmings) from trash.
2. Large food businesses and restaurants that meet certain requirements are now required to donate surplus edible food to local nonprofits, food banks and other organizations helping feed people in need.

According to Feeding America, nearly 40% of all food grown is wasted. If we can use and distribute food more effectively, we can lengthen the life of our landfills, reduce the methane in our atmosphere and feed more people. In turn, we can create a more sustainable and circular economy for our food.

In the San Diego area, your food and yard waste is turned into compost and mulch at our award-winning Otay Landfill composting facility. In 2022, our compost facility won the California

Resource Recovery Association's Dave Hardy Leadership in Organics Award for being California's first fully solar-powered compost facility. The facility was also recognized as the National Waste & Recycling Association's Organics Management Facility of the Year. The compost and mulch created here are valuable products that can be reused or resold for public landscaping projects, food production and farming. Plus, we give away mulch and compost to residents for use in personal, community or school gardens.

Republic Services is committed to being a steward of the environment we share, and we hope you will help us deliver on this promise. The investments we've made for our sustainable future come at a cost. We hope you understand that this is meant to benefit our community and our planet for generations to come.

If you have any questions or need any support in getting organics recycling set up in your home or business, please reach out to our Sustainability Advisor at [Ahunt@RepublicServices.com](mailto:Ahunt@RepublicServices.com).

## Organic Materials Recycling Tips for Residents



### Residents – Single-Family Homes

- Separate food scraps and food-soiled paper from the recycling and trash in your kitchen.
- Put scraps into a container with a lid to reduce odors. If you wish, you can freeze or refrigerate the scraps.
- Do NOT bag scraps in plastic, compostable or biodegradable collection bags. You may use paper bags or wrap scraps in newspaper to absorb liquids.
- Place loose food scraps and food-soiled paper into the green organics cart with yard trimmings.
- Keep the curbside cart cleaner by placing cardboard, leaves or other yard clippings in the bottom, adding food scraps and then layering more yard clippings on

top. You can also sprinkle baking soda at the bottom to reduce odor.

- Place all organic materials inside your cart, and close the lid — no material should be sticking out of the top or sitting on the ground.

### Residents – Multi-Family Units

- Separate food scraps and food-soiled paper from the recycling and trash in your kitchen.
- Put scraps into a container with a lid to reduce odors. If you wish, you can freeze or refrigerate the scraps.
- Place loose food scraps and food-soiled paper into the green organics cart or dumpster.
- Place all organic materials inside your cart or dumpster, and close the lid — no material should stick out of the top or sit on the ground.

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# Attention, Businesses!

## Recycling Requirements for San Diego County Businesses

- Keep designated recyclables and organic materials separate from trash.
- Comply with surplus edible food recovery requirements if identified as a Tier 1 or Tier 2 commercial edible food generator.
- Provide containers for employees and customers that are properly labeled and match the color(s) of your collection carts or dumpsters.
- Pair trash containers for customers with recycling and organics containers (except in restrooms).
- Require in a written contract that gardeners and/or landscapers recycle yard trimmings and wood waste that is taken off-site.
- Educate employees.
- Maintain records, including employee training, landscaping contracts (if applicable) and edible food donation contracts and records (if applicable).



### Additional Requirements in Densely Populated Areas

- Meet the County's minimum diversion service level ratio of 35%. At least 35% (by volume) of the weekly container capacity must be available for recyclables and organic materials.

## Recycling Requirements for San Diego County Multi-Family Customers

- Keep designated recyclables and organic materials separate from trash.
- Require in a written contract that gardeners and/or landscapers recycle yard trimmings and wood waste that is taken off-site.
- Educate tenants and employees.
- Arrange, if possible, for food waste-only service. This allows your tenants to discard food scraps in CLEAR plastic bags. Plastic bags help keep carts and dumpsters cleaner and result in less odor in your waste enclosures.

### Additional Requirements in Densely Populated Areas

- Meet the County's minimum diversion service level ratio of 35%. At least 35% (by volume) of the weekly cart/dumpster capacity must be available for recyclables and organic materials.
- Have an adequate number and size of carts/dumpsters for tenants, employees and contractors:
  - Minimum of 20 gallons of recycling capacity per unit
  - Minimum of 5 gallons of organics capacity per unit

To comply with the ordinance, properties may arrange for recycling service with a franchise hauler or certified collector or may self-haul, donate or sell recyclable materials. If you choose to self-haul, donate or sell materials, you must register with the County. Please contact county staff at **858.694.2456** or **Recycle@SDCounty.CA.gov** for details. Non-compliance is subject to an administrative citation with escalating penalties.

# Restoring the Otay Valley Regional Park



Recently, Urban Corps of San Diego received a \$250,000 grant to fund the revitalization of the Otay Valley Regional Park as part of the Republic Services 2023 National Neighborhood Promise Program, a nationwide community revitalization initiative.

As we move toward the end of 2023 and beyond, the Republic Services Charitable Foundation, in collaboration with Urban Corps of San Diego County, is thrilled to invite the community to join us in an ongoing initiative dedicated to revitalizing Otay Valley Regional Park. Our mission for the upcoming year is to continue the extensive cleanup efforts along the Otay River Valley, extending into 2024. This endeavor aligns with our commitment to environmental sustainability and waste removal. We aim to preserve this land's natural beauty and promote sustainability education among our volunteers and the Chula Vista community. Republic Services is excited to contribute to restoring this beautiful piece of nature, providing an enjoyable, sustainable environment for all to cherish. We look forward to opportunities for community involvement in the new year.

## Commercial Edible Food Generators

### Tier 1

**Supermarkets**  
A full-line, self-service retail store with gross annual sales of \$2 million or more, and which sells a line of dry grocery, canned goods, or nonfood items and some perishable items.

**Grocery Stores**  
Grocery store with a total facility size equal to or greater than 10,000 square feet.

**Food Service Providers**  
An entity primarily engaged in providing food services to institutional, governmental, commercial, or industrial locations of others based on contractual arrangements with these types of organizations.

**Food Distributors**  
A company that distributes food to entities including, but not limited to, supermarkets and grocery stores.

**Wholesale Food Vendors**  
A business or establishment engaged in the merchant wholesale distribution of food, where food (including fruits and vegetables) is received, shipped, stored, and prepared for distribution to a retailer, warehouse, distributor, or other destination.

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### Tier 2

**Local Education Agency**  
A local education agency is defined as a school district, charter school, or county office of education, with an on-site food facility, that is not subject to the control of city or county regulations related to solid waste.

**State Agencies**  
State agencies with a cafeteria with 250 or more seats or a total cafeteria facility size equal to or greater than 5,000 square feet.

**Restaurants**  
Restaurant with 250 or more seats, or a total facility size equal to or greater than 5,000 square feet.

**Hotels**  
Hotel with an on-site food facility and 200 or more rooms.

**Health Facilities**  
Health facility with an on-site food facility and 100 or more beds.

**Large Venues**  
Large venue means a permanent venue facility that annually seats or serves an average of more than 2,000 individuals within the grounds of the facility per day of operation.

**Large Events**  
Large event means an event including, but not limited to, a sporting event or a flea market, that charges an admission price, or is operated by a local agency, and serves an average of more than 2,000 individuals per day of operation of the event, at a location that includes, but is not limited to, a public, nonprofit, or privately owned park, parking lot, golf course, street system, or other open space when being used for an event.

# What to Do With Your Plastic Bags

Your recycling cart or dumpster should only have items that are empty, dry and loose. Plastic bags of any kind are NOT accepted in the recycling stream as they are a significant source of contamination. When plastic bags are mixed with other recyclables, they get tangled in equipment in the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF), causing frequent stops to remove them and sometimes damaging the equipment. Plus, they do NOT get recycled. Instead of mixing plastic bags with other recyclables, use these alternative solutions.

**REUSE** plastic shopping bags by taking them back to the store and refilling them with groceries.

**REPURPOSE** bags around the house. Larger plastic bags can be used as trash liners for small waste baskets. Smaller bags, such as bread bags, can be used for food storage or for dog waste disposal.

**REPLACE** plastic bags with reusable shopping bags. The easiest way to deal with plastic bags is to not have to deal with them at all!

Credit: Tanuza | iStock | Getty Images Plus

# Don't Bag Your Recyclables

Please don't bag your recyclables. Plastic bags are not accepted in the recycling stream. There are only five main items that should be going in your recycling cart or dumpster, and they are: glass bottles, plastic bottles, cartons, metal cans and paper. All of these items need to be empty, clean and dry.

Why? Plastic bags become shredded plastic that gets tangled in sorting equipment at the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF). Plastic bags that make it intact to the rapidly moving conveyor at the MRF will be pulled from the line and sent to the landfill. This means all of that sorting happening at home or work will be for nothing, and the whole bag will be trash. There is simply no time to open the bags and empty out the recyclables. To help your local recycling center, always make sure your recyclables are empty, clean, dry and loose!

# Proper Disposal for Household Hazardous Waste (HHW)

It is against the law to place chemicals labeled Caution, Warning, Danger, Poison, Toxic, Flammable, Corrosive, or similar substances that can be dangerous to collection and disposal workers and the environment, into recycling or waste carts or dumpsters. Electronic waste, such as televisions, computers and cell phones, and universal waste, including common batteries and fluorescent lights, are also not allowed in recycling or waste carts or dumpsters.



There are affordable, safe, legal and convenient disposal options for hazardous, electronic and universal waste throughout San Diego County.

For more information:

- **Households:** Visit [sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/dpw/recycling/hhw.html](https://sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/dpw/recycling/hhw.html) for details. You can also use the HHW drop-off facilities listed at the right.
- **Small Businesses:** If you generate less than 27 gallons, or 220 pounds, of hazardous waste each month or 2.2 pounds of acutely hazardous waste each month, call **858.694.2801**.
- **Large Businesses:** Call the County of San Diego Hazardous Materials Division at **800.253.9933**.
- **Seniors (65+) and Disabled Unincorporated Residents:** Limited door-to-door pickups of HHW are available. Call **877.R.1.EARTH (877.713.2784)** for more information.

Look for the FAQs at [RepublicServices.com/SanDiegoCountyCA](https://RepublicServices.com/SanDiegoCountyCA) for more information and resources for mail-back programs and drop-off sites for different materials. Call **877.R.1.EARTH (877.713.2784)** with questions about where to properly dispose of just about anything and for information on scheduling an appointment at your nearest HHW facility.

Used oil, oil filters and electronics can also be recycled at many local businesses. Call the HHW Hotline **(877.R.1.EARTH/877.713.2784)** or search **WasteFreeSD.org** for a location near you.

# HHW Drop-Off Facilities

## Ramona HHW Facility for Unincorporated Residents

- Location: Ramona Disposal Transfer Station, 324 Maple St., Ramona
- Appointments required: Call **877.713.2784** or schedule online.
- Appointments available on the first and third Saturdays of the month, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

## Escondido HHW Facility for Unincorporated Residents

- Location: Escondido Disposal Transfer Station, 1044 W. Washington Ave., Escondido
- Appointments required: Call **877.713.2784** or schedule online.
- Appointments available from 12:30 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. only
- City of Escondido residents: Call **760.745.3203**.

## El Cajon HHW Facility

- Location: 925 O'Connor Street, El Cajon (at the Waste Management [WM] Transfer Station)
- Appointments Required: Available every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Please call WM to schedule an appointment, using the following steps:
  1. Call WM at **619.596.5100**.
  2. Say "Household Hazardous Waste" when the virtual assistant asks what you want help with. This will bring you to the Haul Away landing zone.
  3. If you are a WM customer, say your address or account number (City of Santee residents and some County residents are serviced by WM).
  4. If you are NOT a WM customer, say "No Address" or "No Account."
  5. Say "Residential" when asked if it is a residential, business or contractor address.
  6. You will be connected with an agent who can schedule your HHW drop-off appointment.
  7. Please note: If it associates your phone number with an account for a different facility, such as Temecula, repeat "No Address."

# Unwanted Mattress?



Sadly, too many mattresses are illegally dumped along roadsides or in empty lots. But they don't have to end up there. In California, the Mattress Recycling Council manages a recycling program that is available to everyone and ensures free and easy recycling. When you purchase a new mattress, the retailer (even online) is required to offer no-cost take-back of your old mattress. Another option is to drop off the mattress and box springs for recycling at the Sycamore or Otay Landfill. Visit [ByeByeMattress.com/programs-by-state/california](https://ByeByeMattress.com/programs-by-state/california) for more information.

# Construction and Demolition (C&D) Recycling

In the County of San Diego, construction and demolition (C&D) projects must divert 65% of their waste from landfill disposal.

**What is C&D?**  
C&D is nonhazardous, uncontaminated material generated during construction, renovation, repair or demolition of buildings and other structures.

**What happens to C&D?**  
More than 80% of C&D ends up in a landfill – but it doesn't have to. C&D can be recovered and recycled.

**What can you do to reduce, reuse and recycle?**  
You can help divert C&D materials from disposal by practicing source reduction, salvaging, recycling and reusing existing materials, and buying used and recycled materials and products. You can:

- Salvage and reuse items of high value that can be reclaimed.
- Move or relocate a building instead of traditional demolition.
- Dismantle buildings through deconstruction.

Roll-off dumpsters cannot exceed 10 tons, per DOT regulations.

For more information, contact Andrew Burns at [ABurns@RepublicServices.com](mailto:ABurns@RepublicServices.com).

## Acceptable Recycling Items



## Unacceptable Recycling Items





Credit: AJ\_Watt | E+ | Getty Images

# Reducing Food Waste at Home

Food waste is a problem that affects both our economy and the environment. A significant portion of food waste occurs at the household level. Reducing food waste at home is not just a personal responsibility, but also a step toward a more sustainable planet. Here are some practical tips and tricks for minimizing food waste in your home:

### Plan Your Meals

- **Create a shopping list:** Plan your meals for the week, make a shopping list, and stick to it. This helps you avoid impulse buying and ensures that you only buy what you need.
- **Use a meal planner:** Meal planning apps and tools can help you organize and plan your meals effectively to use what you have.

### Store Food Properly

- **Use proper containers:** Store food in airtight containers to keep it fresh longer.
- **Understand food labels:** Learn the difference between “sell by,” “use by,” and “best by” dates, and don’t throw away food that is still good to eat.
- **Rotate your stock:** Practice the “first in, first out” method to ensure that older products are used before newer ones.

### Cook Smarter

- **Cook in appropriate portions:** Cook only the amount of food you need to avoid leftovers that may go to waste.
- **Repurpose leftovers:** Be creative with your leftovers by transforming them into new meals.
- **Freeze what you can’t eat:** If you have excess food, freeze it for later instead of tossing it out.

### Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

- **Use food scraps:** Utilize peels, stems and other parts of vegetables and fruits in broths or as part of other recipes.
- **Compost your scraps:** Compost food scraps in your organics cart or dumpster. You can also add fruit and vegetable scraps to your backyard compost bin.
- **Recycle packaging:** Be mindful of packaging, and choose products with recyclable or minimal packaging.

Reducing food waste at home requires conscious effort, planning and creativity. By incorporating these strategies, you can positively impact the environment, save money and enjoy a more mindful and sustainable lifestyle.

# Planning a Party?

No one wants to host a party or family gathering and run out of food. As a result, we tend to make the opposite mistake — overbuying and over-preparing. By properly estimating how much food you need, you can save yourself time and money. Plus, you’ll reduce waste and unwanted leftovers. To calculate what you’ll need for your next party or celebration, use the “Guest-imator” tool at [SavetheFood.com/guestimator](https://www.savethefood.com/guestimator).

# Simple Tips for Collecting Food Scraps

Collecting food scraps in the kitchen as you cook or clean up is simple.

1. At the cutting board, set a scrap bowl or your kitchen pail next to you. Place all trimmings into the scrap bowl or pail. Have a separate pile for plastic wrappers, produce stickers and bags, and make sure those items go into the trash.
2. After cooking, scrape any food waste left behind into the kitchen pail. If you bake with parchment paper that is 100% fiber-based, it can go into the pail, too.
3. When you’re done eating, scrape food from plates or bowls directly into your kitchen pail. This includes uneaten food, bread or pizza crusts, and even bones.
4. When cleaning out the fridge, remove old food from wrappers and packages before you place it into the kitchen pail or curbside cart. For instance, if you have old yogurt or sour cream, dump it out of the plastic container. Don’t forget to wipe out or rinse the tub for recycling!



Credit: Candle Photo | iStock | Getty Images

# Holiday Collection Schedule

There will be no recycling, organics and waste collection services on these holidays:

- Christmas Day, Monday, December 25, 2023
- New Year’s Day, Monday, January 1, 2024

Collections on and after these holidays will be delayed by one day for the remainder of the week.

*We want your suggestions, questions and comments!*

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For more information, please visit:  
[RepublicServices.com/SanDiegoCountyCA](https://www.RepublicServices.com/SanDiegoCountyCA)

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