Garbage Bills to Look Different

Your garbage service bill will soon have a new look and be even easier to read. The City of San José is modernizing its utility billing system so that you’ll be able to access your account information via the Internet, make online payments, and take advantage of other self-service features. Customer service representatives will be able to view the most up-to-date information on your account whenever you call. More information about the new billing system will be sent to you this spring. Look for the new bill format this summer.

Safe Disposal Methods For Toxic Technology Waste

Find out how to recycle most electronic items through the Recycling Hotline at 800-533-8414 or (408) 924-5453.

PG&E will pick up an old refrigerator or freezer, which is in working larger than 10 cubic feet, at no charge and pay the customer $35 for each appliance. For more information, call 800-299-7273.

Universal Waste – New rules for disposal of toxic technology

As of February 2006, a new “Universal Waste” law prohibits Californians from throwing household batteries, fluorescent bulbs, and electronics such as cell phones, computers, and PDAs into their recycling or garbage carts. They have been banned from the landfill because they contain mercury and other toxics that can harm wildlife, streams, and groundwater. They can also harm employees in recycling centers and at the landfill if they accidentally break. See the back page for a complete list of these items and tips on how San José residents can dispose of them safely.

In 2003, more than 515,000 tons of electronics went into landfills in California. By weight, 44 percent were computer monitors and TV sets, and 23 percent were printers, disk drives, laptops and other computer equipment. When electronic devices are crushed in landfills, the lead, mercury, copper and other metals contained in these items can leach out and pollute groundwater, streams and wildlife.

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, about 70 percent of the toxic heavy metals in landfills comes from electronic waste.

Most cities in Santa Clara County contract with the County to operate collection programs for paints, solvents, batteries and other hazardous materials commonly found in homes. The County has partnerships with local stores to take back batteries and fluorescent bulbs. There are also 42 private companies that collect electronic waste, funded partially by fees collected by the State when electronics are sold. There is pending legislation that will require stores that sell cell phones to take back an old one from the buyer.

So please don’t toss any of these items into your recycling or garbage carts. Help protect our natural resources by handling electronic and hazardous waste properly.

See back page for safe disposal methods.

Check our newsletter links at www.sjrecycles.org for more information.
Your Setouts Matter

Take advantage of the option to choose the yard trimmings service that is right for you.

Many of you must be wondering why San José has two types of yard trimmings collection. San José has designed its yard trimmings collection program based on three important priorities: maximum diversion of yard trimmings, a high level of customer service, and minimum program costs.

Diversion of Yard Trimnings
San José relies heavily on the collection of yard trimmings to meet the State’s mandate to divert 50% of solid waste from the landfills. San José collects more yard trimmings than all other recyclables such as bottles, cans and paper combined. Loose collection allows for unlimited amounts of yard trimmings to be collected, which is valuable in San José where the “woody” content of yard trimmings piles is very high.

Service Options
Recycle Plus offers residents a choice. Our biennial surveys show that most residents prefer loose collection to cart collection of yard trimmings. Many residents say that they like the convenience of loose collection so much that they would choose the loose collection even if the carts were free. For other residents, a yard trimmings cart is the best option to keep small materials such as grass clippings neatly in place. This allows gardeners or residents to do their yard work any time during the week and roll out the yard waste cart on collection day.

Program Costs
Whether in loose pile or a cart, clean material is most important for keeping program costs down. If our yard trimmings material stays clean, the compost made from the material is of high quality, allowing the contractors to offer the lowest collection costs. Because loose collection is more cost-effective than carts, a modest monthly subscription fee for the yard trimmings cart service helps offset the extra cost of providing this service for those who choose it.

ASk Kirby

Q. Whatever happened to all those yellow recycling bins after we got our recycling carts?

A. Thousands of these yellow bins were donated to non-profit organizations for re-use. One great example is EHC LifeBuilders, Santa Clara County’s largest provider of shelter, housing programs and supportive services to homeless individuals, families and youth. Their “Small Mall” program collects, organizes and distributes donated supplies for their shelters and transitional housing clients. In 2002, during the changeover to single-stream recycling, the City donated over 1,300 yellow recycling bins to this program. At their “Small Mall” facility, shelf after shelf of yellow bins now serve a new purpose, holding such items as dishes, pots and pans, bedding, small appliances, baby supplies and toiletries ready for easy distribution.

Bags in a Bag

Ever wonder what you can do about all those annoying plastic bags you see floating along the highway or congregating next to the bench at a bus stop? Recycle them!

The plastic bag is a wonderful invention! It allows you to carry your groceries home in the rain without tearing, it carries your leftovers home for an enjoyable midnight snack, it helps you to carry many more items during those great half-off sales, and it even makes cleaning Fido’s little mistake on your neighbor’s yard a little easier.

Did you know that plastic bags can do much more? Recycling facilities process plastic bags for their transformation into such great things as fleece sweaters that keep you warm on a chilly day, sturdy carpets, plastic pots for landscaping plants, traffic cones that guide you safely on the road, as well as plastic lumber.

But without your help in recycling these bags, they fly aimlessly through the air landing on whatever is in their way: trees, fences, or a creek that carries them downstream and into the bay. By gathering your clean plastic bags and placing them into a clear single bag, you can ensure that they don’t end up in the bay or on the highway but in your recycling cart.

Proper handling will not only help keep the environment clean, but will also make it easier for recycling facilities to collect plastic bags and convert them into useful items. Everyone wins when the bags are in a bag!