

ecology action center news



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Fall 2013

Second McLean County Hazardous Waste Collection in Two Years: Great Turnout, Shorter Wait Times

By Michael Brown, Executive Director

The Ecology Action Center's October 2013 Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) collection took in significant volumes of hazardous materials with considerably shorter wait times. The 2013 event saw marked improvement over the 2012 collection which saw wait times in excess of 2 hours due to unprecedented turnout. At this year's event, with wait times ranging from 45 minutes at the peak of the event in the morning to less than 10 minutes for much of the afternoon, residents were able to dispose of their hazardous materials quickly and safely.

A total of 20,693 gallons of hazardous materials were collected from 1,829 households during the event, including 1,155 gallons of oil paints, 4,439 gallons of pesticides, 1,615 gallons of aerosol paints, and 5,652 gallons of combustible substances among other materials. These volumes of materials reflect a slight decline from the 2012 HHW collection. That event was the first in five years due to a lack of traditional funding from the Illinois EPA; EAC's year-long fund-raising effort provided 100% local funding for the 2012 collection.

According to the US EPA, the average household generates about 30 pounds of household hazardous wastes a year.

After 6 years on the waiting list, EAC's application for a state sponsored HHW collection was granted, making the October 5, 2013 HHW collection possible. Multiple other community partners also provided critical support including Mitsubishi Motors North America, who provided their parking lots for the collection. McLean County, the Town of Normal, and City of Bloomington all provided assistance for the event while Home Sweet Home Ministries provided e-waste collection services.

According to the US EPA, the average household generates about 30 pounds of household hazardous wastes a year. Locally, one-day hazardous waste collection events can cost between \$110,000 and \$165,000. While these events are often the most convenient means of safe disposal, the most cost effective and safest strategy for their management is source reduction - consciously avoiding generation and use of these hazardous materials wherever possible.

Mark Your Calendar

December 3 Green Drinks

In This Issue

- Green Holiday Guide
-



Holiday/Winter Green Home Guide

Waste Reduction

1. Purchase gifts with minimal or at least recyclable packaging.
2. Use recycled content gift wrap, a reusable gift bag, or even the funnies pages of the newspaper to wrap gifts.
3. Recycle everything possible.
 - Most wrapping paper (non plastic, non metallic) can be recycled. Cardboard and paper board--recyclable.
 - Plastic bags--recyclable with grocery store bags at the grocery store.
 - Styrofoam--only recyclable through mail back programs. Avoid it.
 - Old computers, electronics, and TVs--recyclable through e-waste drop-offs around Bloomington-Normal. See the full list at ecologyactioncenter.org.
 - Holiday lights, cords, and cables--full of copper and recyclable at Behr Metals (formerly Morris-Tick) or at a e-waste drop-off.
 - Old clothes, sheets and towels (in usable or worn condition) that have been replaced by new gifts can be recycled at Home Sweet Home Ministries Warehouse on West Washington. Or take advantage of the new HSHRenew program, with clothing drop-off boxes located around the community (see article for current list). High quality items should be taken directly to the Mission Mart store at XXXXXXXXXX for resale.
 - Christmas Trees will be collected curbside for Bloomington and Normal residents after the holiday for chipping into mulch. Residents living outside these municipalities can take your tree to Twin City Wood Recycling at XXXX Oakland to be properly mulched for a nominal fee.

Local Food

1. Shop at the Winter Farmer's Market at the McLean County Museum of History, 200 N. Main St., in Downtown Bloomington beginning on Saturday, December 21 from 10 am - 12 pm and will continue on each third Saturday of the month through April. Live entertainment, local goods and free access to the Museum!
2. Take advantage of restaurants that focus on locally grown foods like Station 220 in Bloomington or the Harvest Café in Delevan or shop at the source by visiting places like the Ropp Dairy Farm on Ropp Road (no coincidence) in Normal.

Energy Conservation and Efficiency

1. If you are in the need for new lighting, check out the current selection of CFLs. The technology continues to evolve so CFL are now available for dimmers, 3-way lamps, outdoor usage, and more. Better yet, check out the new LEDs, which can save as much as 90% of the energy used by a conventional incandescent bulb! While they are more expensive than CFLs, they are quickly coming down in price--you can now find a 60 Watt equivalent LED bulb for \$10 or less. With a lifespan of 20 years or more, you can save significant energy and significant money for years to come.
2. Install a water heater blanket--cheap, easy to do, and it will quickly pay for itself.
3. Weatherize your windows. If you have older windows, chances are they can be drafty or at least let out more of your warm air (\$\$\$) than you would like. A simple window weatherization kit found at any hardware store can quickly make your windows more airtight and save you money. If you take your time and install them well, you can leave them on year-round, and they will help save you money during the summer too!

Water Protection and Conservation

1. Minimize usage of salt on your sidewalk and driveway as it contributes to stormwater runoff pollution. Save it for when you really need it. Shovel promptly before compacting snow on your driveway or sidewalk to prevent the need for it. Sand may also be used as an alternative to provide traction on the snow or ice, but it should also be used conservatively as it will also contribute to stormwater runoff pollution.



2. There's snow on the ground but ***we are still in a drought!*** Please conserve water wherever possible to reduce your impact on the availability of drinking water later on in the year when we really need it. And while this issue is generally thought to be in reference to Bloomington and Hudson residents who are dependent upon the surface waters of Lake Bloomington and Evergreen Lake, a drought also impacts those of us in Normal and other local communities using groundwater supplies. In the same way that reduced precipitation results in a lower level of water in our surface reservoirs, it also reduces the recharge rate of the Mahomet Aquifer.

- Check all faucets, pipes, and toilets periodically for leaks. A faucet drip or invisible leak in the toilet will add up to 15 gallons of water a day, or 105 gallons a week, which adds up to 5,475 gallons of wasted water a year. Check your flapper periodically to make sure it's a tight fit.
- Install water-saving shower heads. Low-flow shower heads deliver 2.5 gallons of water per minute or less and are relatively inexpensive. Older shower heads use 5 to 7 gallons per minute.
- Take shorter showers. Simply taking shorter showers will save gallons of water.
- Install a 1.6 gallon low-flow toilet or better yet, a dual-flush toilet. Ultra low-flow toilets use only 1.6 gallons of water per flush; a dual-flush can use even less on the lower-flush setting. Using these could cut indoor water use by as much as 20%. Older toilets use 3.5 to 7 gallons per flush.
- Check for toilet leaks. Once a year, check for toilet leaks. Remove the toilet tank cover and drip 10 drops of food coloring into the tank. After 15 minutes, check for color in the toilet bowl. If you see any color, your toilet has a leak and should be repaired immediately. Again, remember to check your flapper periodically to make sure it's a tight fit.
- Don't use the toilet as a wastebasket. Using a wastebasket instead of the toilet for tissues and other bits of trash will save gallons of water that are otherwise wasted.
- Install high efficiency, low-flow faucet aerators. Older faucets use between 3 and 7 gallons per minute. Low-flow faucet aerators use no more than 1.5 gallons of water per minute. The aerators can be attached to most existing faucets.
- Fix leaky faucets immediately. A leaky faucet may simply need a new washer. Small faucet leaks can waste 20 gallons of water a day. Large leaks can waste hundreds of gallons.
- Turn off the water while shaving, brushing teeth, etc. Don't let the water run when you brush your teeth, wash your face or hands, or shave. This can save 3 to 7 gallons per minute.
- Fill your dishwasher. Your dishwasher uses the same amount of water whether it's full or just partially full of dishes, so be sure to fill it. Many dishwashers have a water saver cycle to save even more water.
- Defrost food in the refrigerator. When defrosting food, plan ahead to thaw it in the refrigerator or microwave oven instead of under running water.
- Select proper water level for laundry. Unlike your dishwasher, you can control the amount of water used by your clothes washers. Select the proper water level for each load of laundry. A front-loading washer machine uses 1/3 less water than a top loading machine.

Bonus Programs

- Recycle your old fridge and get money back! We are a registered nonprofit participant of the ActOnEnergy® Recycling Referral Bonus Program. This means that you can get \$50 for yourself and donate \$20 to the Ecology Action Center simply by making a phone call!
- Open to residential customers who receive their electricity from Ameren Illinois. Fridge or freezer must be full-size and still working. Call 1.866.899.9088 to schedule a FREE pickup of your fridge or freezer. Tell your customer service person that you want to donate a \$20 referral bonus to the Ecology Action Center. They will ask for our Group ID Number, which is RR11-0949.
- It's that easy to help us raise funds! You'll receive a \$50 Reward within six weeks from the date your appliance is picked up. It's good to know that 95% of your old appliance will be recycled, with much of the aluminum, plastic, foam and metal going to create new products, while the harmful chemicals will be safely disposed of.

Radon Reminder

The US Surgeon General and many others have warned that radon is the first leading cause of Lung Cancer, after smoking. Radon is 5 to 6 times more dangerous to your lungs than second hand smoke. If you smoke and your home has elevated radon levels, your risk of lung cancer is especially high. 4 picoCuries per liter of Radon is the action level – so if your radon test is above 4 pCi/L, consider fixing your radon problem.

Radon test kits are available at the EAC for \$10.00 each. These 5 to 7 day tests are simple, reliable, easy to use and you will get test results in 10 days after mailing in. Contact Ruth Ann Lipic, Radon Program Coordinator at 309-454-3169 with your questions and concerns.



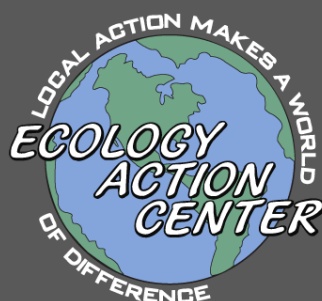
Textile Collection Opportunities to Increase

There are numerous textile collection boxes in parking lots around the community, but most of these belong to for-profit companies outside of our community.

Soon, residents will have the opportunity to donate shoes and textiles to a **local, non-profit** organization, in a nearby parking lot. Home Sweet Home Ministries already accepts such donations behind the Mission Mart on Oakland Avenue and at their warehouse facility at 1700 West Washington Street; soon, donation boxes will be scattered throughout the community.

At press time, the exact locations of these new white and blue drop off boxes was not determined, but be watching for them. The EAC website will show the locations as soon as they are finalized.

Remember, donations of all kinds (textiles, electronics, household items and more) to Home Sweet Home Ministries enables a great local organization to provide assistance to local people.



America Recycles Day Mega Recycling Event

November 16, 2013, 8:00-1:00,
IWU Hansen Center

By **Kris Hall, EAC Assistant Director**

It's not exactly a Hallmark-type holiday – no greeting cards, flashing lights, or carefully wrapped gifts – but America Recycles Day is an opportunity to reflect on what we use, and think hard about how we dispose of what's left over, unwanted, and broken. (And, by the way, many flashing lights and other trappings of traditional holidays **are recyclable!**)

We've heard it before, but let's review: recycling is important because it keeps millions of tons of waste from spending eternity in a hole in the ground. Instead, this material is turned into a myriad of usable items: new containers, new cardboard, building materials, even fabric for soft fleece jackets! Using recycled materials means that manufacturers don't have to use virgin raw materials, which saves energy and reduces pollution.

As the "green" movement has progressed, more and more manufacturers are devising ways to use more recycled materials in their products. This means that the number of different items we can recycle is always increasing. The limit to what we can recycle is really just a matter of economics – are enough of a desired item disposed of in a way in which they could be collected, sorted and transported, and then melted or shredded to become something else? Looked at from this perspective, it seems clear that milk jugs are a good candidate for recycling, while assorted plastic lawn furniture is not.

Now that both Bloomington and Normal have single stream curbside recycling programs for paper, cardboard, and most types of containers, many local residents merely have to push a cart to their curbs to keep much of their discarded material from a home in the landfill. These are the items found in large quantities, and there is a ready market for these materials. Residents who do not have access to curbside recycling are welcome to use the drop off bins operated

by the Town of Normal or Midwest Fiber. (See our website for locations.)

That brings us to America Recycles Day. There are a number of "other" materials that are recyclable in our community that are not permitted in the single stream carts or drop off bins. All the materials being collected at this event are recyclable all year, but residents usually need to take them to special drop off sites, which are listed on the EAC website. In celebration of America Recycles Day, we are offering **One-Stop Drop-Off** for these items:

Electronics: It is now against the law to discard most consumer electronics with regular household garbage and send them to the landfill. Old computers, cell phones, printers, monitors, cords, chargers, game systems and more will be

accepted at the event.

Textiles and shoes: Millions of pounds of clothing end up in landfills each year. Some is still wearable, some is not. All of it can be kept from the landfill by giving it to our local recycling partner Home Sweet Home Ministries. This is the time to look through the closet and find worn-out shoes, holey sweatshirts, and that sweater that was never worn!

Household Batteries and CFL bulbs: The Ecology Action Center coordinates a program collecting these items throughout the year with multiple drop-offs around the community.

Plastic Garden Pots: A small crew of dedicated volunteers oversees an amazing effort to keep truckloads of plastic waste from the landfill. When preparing for winter, don't throw the dead fern away with the pot – remove the fern for composting, and bring the pot to America Recycles Day!

Terracycle: Perhaps the most unusual of all, Terracycle is a program that keeps very specific and unusual items from the landfill. See the complete list at the EAC website, but examples of the items you can bring to America Recycles Day are empty toothpaste



America Recycles Day
11.16.13

tubes, juice pouches, cosmetic containers, granola bar wrappers and lunch kit packaging. These items tend to be things most people don't generate in high volume, but there are several permanent drop off sites in the community.

Do some fall cleaning, load up the car, and bring all these items to the parking lot at the Hansen Center at IWU. The entrance will be off Emerson, across from the Shirk Center.

The collection event will happen from 8:00 am until 1:00 pm on Saturday, November 16. This event is for **household waste** only; no business waste may be accepted. In addition, Household Hazardous Wastes such as paints, chemicals, automotive fluids, etc. are not accepted at this event. Please call (309) 454-3169 with questions or check out our website at www.ecologyactioncenter.org.

In Case You Missed It...

By **Emma Byall, EAC Intern**

Maybe you forgot about the Hazardous Household Waste collection, or were out of town, or didn't feel like putting on pants on a Saturday morning? If you still want to get rid of your old paint, oil, and chemicals, you may have to wait a while. Traditional funding for hazardous waste collections has become infrequent, so we don't know exactly when the next one will be. We're hopeful that there will be one within the next few years, as we are actively working on a solution for the lack of funding.

Meanwhile, it's important that hazardous materials be disposed of properly and safely. Household wastes such as fertilizers, insecticides, and oil-based paints contain toxic chemicals. If thrown away improperly, they can contaminate our local environment and even leach into our ground or surface water supplies. This is why they must always be disposed of safely, not thrown into the trash or dumped down the drain.

If you still have hazardous wastes in your house, one option would be to try to use them up. If you have some paint left, give that wall one more coat to finish up the whole can. Another option is to give them away to a friend who could use them. Sometimes community organizations will take them for their own use. The best way to reduce household hazardous waste is to have less of it to start. Try buying only as much as you need,

or look for alternate methods for cleaning instead of harsh chemicals.

Some things, like medicines, mercury containing light bulbs, electronics, and motor oil, can't always be used up all the way. Luckily, proper disposal options exist for these items all year long. There are multiple places in Bloomington-Normal that accept these items and more. Please contact the EAC and we can direct you to the recycling or disposal site nearest to you.

The recycling site may be as close as Illinois Wesleyan University. The Ecology Action Center is proud to be hosting the annual America Recycles Day MEGA Recycling Event on November 16. Many examples of household waste can be dropped off and recycled, including electronics, batteries, and CFLs. Non-hazardous waste such as clothes, shoes, and plastic garden pots will also be accepted, as well as free confidential paper shredding. Paint, chemicals, and other hazardous waste will not be accepted at this event.

What if you still have some of that stuff around the house?

Unfortunately, the closest city to McLean County with a long-term waste disposal site is Naperville, about 2 hours' drive north. The need for another hazardous household waste collection in Central Illinois is real, but regular funding is as yet not available. Whatever you do – don't dump. Save it for a HHW collection.



Special Thank You

The Ecology Action Center is grateful for the many and varied contributions of all of our members, donors, funders, volunteers, and partners.

This month we would like to specifically draw attention to the generous in-kind contributions to the EAC by two local businesses, Kevin Collins Design and Mouthhat Graphic Design and Illustration. Both have provided high-quality design services to the EAC resulting in some of the beautiful and attention-getting banners you may see at EAC events.



GRAPHIC DESIGN
and
ILLUSTRATION

KEVIN
COLLINS
DESIGN





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