



"Reduce – Reuse – Recycle"

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No Taste for Waste – New Food Recycling Law

Preventing food waste makes a difference to families and the household budget. According to a study by the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), American households throw out about 25% of the food and beverages they purchase; the average family of four throws away from \$1,365 to \$2,275 worth of food per year. Planning meals before shopping, using up what we have, shopping with a list to buy only what we need, prepping food for easier consumption, and using storage techniques to keep food fresh longer can go a long way in getting more from our food. Reducing the amount of organic materials sent to landfills is part of the effort to reduce methane greenhouse gas (produced from rotting organic material), and a significant step toward a future without landfills.

The State of California recently enacted a new Assembly Bill (AB 1826) mandating Commercial Organic Recycling effective April 1, 2016. Under AB 1826, many local schools, institutions, hospitals, restaurants, hotels, resorts, agricultural and packing businesses are now required to separate all organic waste, including food scraps and outdated food for composting.

The law phases in over several years, expanding requirements to include more businesses over time. Starting this year, California businesses that generate eight cubic yards or more of organic waste per week must separate that waste for composting or recycling. By 2019 all businesses producing four cubic yards or more of garbage per week will be required to recycle their organic material.

If your business generates food scraps or landscaping waste and you are interested in learning more about available programs or how to expand your existing program, please contact your waste collection service or Salinas Valley Recycles for more information. There is a fee for organics collection service but it is a lower rate than regular garbage service, so many businesses will be able to reduce their trash service to help offset this cost, and potentially decrease their overall waste collection costs. Salinas Valley Recycles may be able to assist you in finding other ways to reduce food waste from your business, starting with an analysis of your waste stream and understanding how to reduce waste before it happens.

Knowing where waste is occurring can be extremely helpful in reducing waste and losses. Tracking performance and proficiency in food preparation, planning, minimizing overproduction, creative cross-utilization of overproduced food (leftovers!), donating food to feed people and animals, and analyzing what people are leaving on their plates to make adjustments in the kitchen can all have significant impacts on reducing food waste.

Unfortunately, collection of food scraps from homes is not yet an option, though waste service providers hope to offer this service in the future. Organic waste from landscaping including weeds,



leaves, branches, and lawn clippings can be placed in the yard cart for collection and recycling, but food scraps are not yet permitted. Until then, residents can take advantage of free workshops to learn how to compost at home, even in small spaces, to keep food scraps out of the trash and turn them into a nutrient-rich soil amendment. Visit SalinasValleyRecycles.org for workshop dates and locations.

