



"Reduce – Reuse – Recycle"

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The Economics of Big Trash

Big trash, also known as “bulky items,” is a big problem in Monterey County when people don’t know what to do with it. Illegally dumped bulky items like mattresses, furniture and appliances have popped up on back roads, under bridges, and even on the shoulder of Highway 101. For the County, annual cleanup costs are more than \$1 Million for labor and equipment to remove illegally dumped trash and litter, and that doesn’t include what the cities pay.

Even greater potential costs are the public health impacts of pop-up dumpsites where trash kills vegetation on the banks of creeks and alongside roads; it causes erosion and storm drain backups that flood communities; it enables diseases spread by rodents and other pests it attracts, and by mosquitoes that breed in standing water it collects; it can cost people their lives. It hurts our eyes, our industry and our pride. It should also hurt our sensibility because it is 100% avoidable.

The biggest motivating factor for illegal dumping of bulky items is avoiding cost for disposal, because individuals are unaware of all the free disposal options available. Between the annual community cleanup events, curbside pickup services, and the free recycling of many items at Salinas Valley Recycles facilities, there’s no excuse for trashing our community. To report a litter problem, visit www.keepmontereycountyclean.org

Garbage haulers, local cities and the County annually organize community cleanup events. Residents can bring their bulky items and bagged trash to these events for free disposal. Upcoming events are planned for Salinas, Gonzales, Chualar, Aromas and more. Events are listed on the website www.SalinasValleyRecycles.org and promoted through public service announcements, flyers and advertising in the community.

Curbside bulky item pickup service is available through the companies that pick up your garbage, recycling and yardwaste each week. In the City of Salinas, Republic Services offers a free pickup of bulky items each year, right from your curb! Contact Republic Services at (831) 775-3840 for more information.

Free recycling of TV’s and computers, mattresses, big plastic toys, non-refrigerating appliances and more is always available at the Salinas Valley Recycles facilities in Salinas, Gonzales and King City. Check www.SalinasValleyRecycles.org to see what is free to recycle, and what has a fee for disposal.

Donating items with useful remaining life is another way to get rid of unwanted bulky items. Some organizations accepting donations may even provide tax deductions and pickup services.

In the economics of trash, littering bulky items is the most costly of all. But properly recycling and disposing of them is another step in the right direction to a future without landfills!

