



HEALTH CARE AGENCY/PUBLIC HEALTH ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH *INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN*

TO: Orange County Retail Food Facility Owners/Operators

SUBJECT: Environmentally Safe Handling of Trash and Garbage

Environmental Health is encouraging food facility owners to reevaluate how they handle the trash and garbage generated by their businesses. Improper disposal of trash and garbage, along with poor maintenance of trash bins can create problems for the community and the environment.

Urban runoff that flows into the storm drains and then into our ocean waters is an ever-growing problem in Orange County. Improperly maintained trash bins can contribute significantly to this serious problem. Trash bins that leak or are overfilled allow rotting food wastes, grease, trash and chemicals to be deposited onto the pavement below. When it rains, or trash bin enclosures are washed down, the runoff takes these pollutants to the gutters and to our storm drain system. Unlike the sewer system, which carries wastewater from indoor drains (i.e., sink, toilet, and bathtub) to a wastewater treatment facility, the storm drain system releases this untreated runoff directly into Orange County's bay and ocean waters. This means that the pollutants caused by the improper disposal of trash and garbage can ultimately be a contributing factor in the posting of our beaches.

Poorly maintained trash bins also attract and promote the breeding of rats, flies and other vermin such as cockroaches. With summer rapidly approaching this becomes a major problem as these germ-carrying vermin reproduce quickly in warm weather. Additionally, food encrusted trash bins produce pungent odors that permeate a neighborhood. Environmental Health receives numerous calls each year from residents complaining about foul odors caused by the improperly maintained trash bins of nearby food businesses. Not only is this a nuisance for the public, but it is also bad for business.

What can you do as the operator of a retail food facility to help prevent this and other environmental problems? Here are a few tips:

Outside trash storage

- ✓ Repair or replace leaky trash containers, dumpsters and compactors. Trash containing food wastes must be kept in leak-proof and rodent-proof containers. Trash bins that leak or become encrusted with food wastes should be exchanged for clean leak-proof containers through your disposal company.
- ✓ Use trash bags that have sufficient strength and water tightness for disposal of garbage. Besides preventing leaks, this will help to minimize odors and fly breeding.
- ✓ Consider using biodegradable trash bags. Many of the plastics we commonly use require decades to decompose in our landfills. Look on the Internet for suppliers, using "biodegradable trash bags" as key words for your search.
- ✓ Use trash containers with tight-fitting lids. If your trash and garbage container tends to become overfilled before your scheduled pick-up date, contact your disposal company for more frequent pick-ups. Be sure to change out your containers when their lids become bent or the bottoms become rusted-out.

Other ways you can help the environment

- ✓ Wash greasy equipment such as vents, vehicles and mats only in designated wash areas that are properly connected to the sewer system.

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- ✓ Minimize the use of products that require disposal. If you must use disposable products, try to use products that are recyclable. Look for the terms "recycled" and "recyclable" on the containers.
- ✓ Recycle oil and grease wastes. NEVER dispose of them down the storm drain or on the ground. You may locate a recycling company in your area by checking the yellow pages under "Renderers".
- ✓ Always recycle cardboard, container glass, aluminum, pallets, and drums.

For additional sanitation or food safety tips contact Orange County Environmental Health at (714) 433-6000.