

Frequently Asked Questions: Reduce / Reuse / Recycle

What can I do to make a better environment?

Start at home with the three R's:

- **Reduce** the amount and toxicity of trash you discard by buying durable goods, not buying packaging that is toxic, and using products that don't deplete our natural resources and do allow reuse of the product.
- **Reuse** items so that you extend the usefulness of what you buy and think creatively!
- **Recycle** items made of paper, cardboard, glass, steel, aluminum and plastics marked with a recycling symbol. These items can be used over again in a different form, and this means we preserve our natural resources, save manufacturing energy, generate less pollution and cut down on the amount of trash and dollars for disposal. And compost your food waste!

Here are ways to reduce water usage:

- Install flow-reducing shower heads and aerators, and automatic shut-off hose nozzles. Water conservation devices for toilet tanks.
- When you buy a new clothes washer, look for a front loader which uses about half the water of a top loader, and also uses less energy.
- Turn off the water while you are brushing your teeth or washing pots and pans. And studies have shown that less water is used during the cycle of a dishwasher than doing dishes by hand!
- To reduce the amount of paper in your life, donate old books and magazines to hospitals, schools and nursing homes.

Just say "no" to:

- Get your name removed from junk mailing lists and you will lighten your annual paper load by 41 pounds or more. Contact the Direct Marketing Association to learn the best way to reduce the junk mail load.
- New American Dream has partnered with an organization called 41pounds.org who promises to completely remove you from up to 95% of the junk mail lists by contacting each organization from which you receive mail and/or catalogs for a one-time fee of \$41.41. Pounds will send out forms to have your name removed from mailing lists.
- A third organization used by several Committee members with success for removing our names from mailing lists for **free** is [Catalog Choice](http://CatalogChoice.org).

Change your lights to change the world:

- By replacing the conventional bulbs your 5 most-used light fixtures with **Energy Star** qualified options, you will not only help the environment, but you will save money on your energy bills as well.
- Use resealable glass containers for food. Glass is preferable to plastic because there will be no transfer of chemicals into the stored food. You can use your old plastic containers for nails, screws and craft items.
- Give your old toothbrush a new life as a tool for cleaning grout.
- Instead of putting your coffee into a paper or foam cup, keep a ceramic mug on hand for the java or tea, and use that old compact disk for a coaster.
- You can even save the silica packets that come with new items, and put them into your boots and gloves to keep them fresh and dry.
- And remember to take a fabric tote bag to the store with you. It's not only environmentally efficient, but it is quite fashionable as well!
- Recycling is easy--once you get the hang of it. Look for product packaging that identifies it as being recyclable or made from recycled materials.

Here are some of the symbols to look for:

- Glass - Aluminum - Steel - Plastics (with different numbers, depending on the plastic)
- You can drop off recyclable metal, glass and paper in the marked bins at the Sherborn Transfer Station, located just south of the Natick/Sherborn Town line on Route 27.
- The Sherborn Transfer station is open to all residents of the Town of Sherborn.
- Pick up your transfer station sticker at Town Hall at 19 Washington Street.

Here are some hints for recycling:

- Keep papers clean and dry, and do not tie them with string. Rinse all cans, bottles and jars.
- Call 508-653-8794 for information about disposing of TV's, air conditioners, tires, car batteries, paints and computers. For easy reference, check [Earth 911](#)
- Another way to recycle is to donate the reusable household items that you no longer need. A great place to drop off items is the Sherborn Swap Shop at the Transfer Station. It costs nothing to drop it or swap it, and your trash just might be another person's sought-after treasure.
- You can give any clean, dry textiles to clothing donation boxes at the Hap Ruane Transfer Station. Anything that is not suitable for reuse as clothing will be turned into feedstock for the textile industry. It might become industrial rags, or it might be shredded to become insulation. Include all clean and dry textiles except what is contaminated with biological or hazardous waste.

- You may also want to contact the local newspapers to see if they offer reduced prices for advertising free reusable items. Online, [Craig's List](#) is also a great way to sell or give away what you don't need.
- Check Charity America at so that your donated items can be matched with organizations that need them. Even old computers are not obsolete for people who need them. Look online for Computers for Schools, Goodwill Industries, National Christina Foundation or Share the Technology.
- Give your old cell phone another chance. Like other electronics, cell phones contain heavy metals, and the batteries are also very toxic. Sherborn has a partnership with Charitable Recycling which takes our shipments of cell phones and refurbishes the usable ones for worthy charities. They also remove the heavy metals from the unusable phones and recycle the rest. There is a collection box at the Sherborn Transfer Station/Hap Ruane Recycling Center.

Recycle old eyeglasses:

- Charities distribute them for use in third world countries. Sherborn's Lion's Club collects eyeglasses at the post office and Town Hall.
- Support recycling by buying products made from recycled materials

What can I do to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

Gases that trap heat in the atmosphere are often called greenhouse gases. Many gases exhibit "greenhouse" properties. Some of them occur in nature (water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide), while others are exclusively human made (like gases used for aerosols). More and more people are becoming concerned about the effects that human-activity gases will make the atmosphere so warm that it could lead to a climate change

Act right now at home to help reduce greenhouse emissions. Seal leaks in the basement and attic where leaks are greatest. If you replace your windows, choose **Energy Star** qualified products for better performance.

Use Green Power. Green power is electricity that is generated from resources such as solar, wind, geothermal, biomass, and low-impact hydro facilities. Conventional electricity generation, based on the combustion of fossil fuels, is the nation's single largest industrial source of air pollution.

You can either buy green power or you can take steps to create a greener home, such as installing solar panels.

Be green in the yard. When you use a power mower, make sure it is a mulching mower to reduce grass clippings. Better yet, use an electric mower powered by solar panels. Composting your food and yard waste reduces the amount of garbage you send to landfills, and also reduces your household's greenhouse emissions.

Shop with a "green" mentality. Look for products with minimal or no packaging. Avoid individually wrapped portions and disposable products. Favor a high recycled content. Choose products in reusable containers. Bring your own canvas bag so you don't need paper or plastic. Avoid pump toothpaste which uses too much plastic. Buy quality items that will last a lifetime. You will not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but you will also save money in the long run!

How do I donate my computer and protect myself from identity theft?

It is the "PC" thing to donate your computer to a charity. Donating your computer helps charities, helps us use valuable materials wisely, and also keeps working PCs out of landfills. Before you pass that computer on, you first need to make sure your machine is one that someone can use. If it works and is less than five years old, then someone can probably use it.

When you delete files in your Windows or MAC computer, the operating systems don't completely erase your files. That's where people can get in trouble with identity theft. Third-party software is a great way to remove all your files.

Disk Wiping Utilities: Disk wiping is a process that writes a series of 1's and 0's over the disk in an effort to securely remove sensitive data. Free disk wiping utilities are found in Active@ Kill Disk, Darik's Boot and Nuke (DBAN) and eraser. Programs like DriveScrubber, Shredit, R-Wipe, and Clean, offer free trial periods. Additional secure (destructive) file and disk deletion tools can be found [Free Secure File / Disk Deletion Utilities site](#).

Each disk wiping program comes with specific directions for use, and the speed of the process depends on the speed and performance of your computer.

MAC users already have a similar option under "Secure Empty Trash." And with Disk Utility you can perform a secure erase of all drive free space. The Apple site offers step-by-step instructions plus a good overview of when to reformat a hard drive. For a general search of the Apple knowledgebase.

Keep usable computers out of the waste stream by donating them to charity.

World Computer Exchange (WCE) provides computers to help connect youth in 63 developing countries to the Internet. To learn what is needed and how to drop off your computer to the Hull, Massachusetts facility, visit the [World Computer Exchange site](#).

Tecschange is a Roxbury organization that uses older computers for computer repair courses to benefit those who cannot afford to buy a new computer. Each student works on several computers, and at the end of the course each student gets to take home a repaired computer. The rest of the computers are donated to non-profit organizations. For information on what is needed and how to make a tax deductible contribution make a telephone call to 617-442-4456 or visit [TecsChange Site](#).

The National Cristina Foundation is a not for profit foundation dedicated to the support of training through donated technology. Please visit the [National Cristina Foundation](#) website for more information

What to Do if a Mercury Thermometer Breaks?

Evacuate the area, making sure that no one walks through the mercury. Make sure to evacuate pets as well. Open all windows and doors to the outside and close all doors to other parts of the house. **Do not** allow children to help with the clean up.

What to do:

- Assemble cleanup supplies. These include disposable gloves, an eyedropper, two stiff pieces of paper or cardboard, two plastic bags, duct tape, a flashlight and a wide-mouth container. What you will use for cleanup will need to be disposed of with the mercury.
- Remove watches and jewelry. Mercury will bond to metal. Wear gloves for protection.
- Clean the spill. First remove watches and jewelry because mercury will bond to metal. Wear disposable gloves for protection.
- On hard surfaces: Mercury can be cleaned up easily from hard surfaces. Use a flashlight to find the loose mercury beads. Gently scoop the mercury together and lift the beads into the wide-mouth jar with the stiff paper. Pick up remaining mercury with sticky tape and place contaminated tape in a plastic bag along with the eyedropper, stiff paper, and gloves. Put that bag into another plastic bag. Seal and label the bag as mercury waste. Place this bag and sealed container in the second bag. Label it as mercury waste and call your State agency for appropriate disposal.
- On absorbent surfaces: If a spill occurs on carpet, curtains, upholstery or another absorbent surface, the mercury-contaminated section should be cut out. This cut-out section, along with all cleanup items, should be placed in a plastic bag. Label it as mercury waste and call your State agency for appropriate disposal.
- In water: Mercury will sink to the bottom. Gently remove as much water as possible and recover the mercury with an eyedropper and put it in a wide-mouth container. Close the lid, seal with tape, label the jar and call your State agency for disposal instructions.
- In a drain: Mercury will get caught in the sink trap. Working over a tray, remove the trap and pour the contents into a wide-mouth container. Close the lid and seal with tape. Contact your State agency for disposal instructions.
- Be informed: For more information about Mercury visit the [Environmental Protection Agency](#).

What must I do if a fluorescent bulb breaks?

The Environmental Protection Agency recommends that you take the following steps if a fluorescent light breaks:

- Open a window and leave the room for 15 minutes or more

- Carefully scoop up glass fragments and powder with stiff paper or cardboard and place them in a sealed plastic bag.
- Wear disposable rubber gloves while you wipe the area clean with damp paper towels or disposable wet wipes. Place those in the plastic bag as well.
- Do not use a vacuum or broom to clean up the broken bulb on hard surfaces. If a fluorescent bulb breaks on a rug or carpet, follow the steps above, using duct tape to pick up the small pieces or powder.
- Put that sealed bag into another sealed bag and dispose of in your outdoor trash container or take it to the transfer station.

I need to get rid of my old TV & monitor. Is there a free way to do it?

At this time we do not know of any place that will take TV's for free because of market conditions. However, Best Buy will still take most other electronics for **free**. Check [Electronics, Appliances and Fitness Equipment Recycling at Best Buy](#) for more information. Although Sherborn only charges for TV's and not for other electronic devices you bring in for recycling, we do get charged by the vendor who picks them up for processing. Therefore, we would prefer that you use Best Buy for all your electronics recycling.

Staples may still take your monitors for free as well as other electronics, but not TV's. Check it out [Recycling Services at Staples](#).

Factoid: Electronic Waste is a Heavy Problem

As the technology industry sees continued growth, the amount of electronic waste is also increasing. A study by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency showed that in 2005, used or unwanted electronics amounted to approximately 1.9 to 2.2 million tons. Of that, about 1.5 to 1.9 million tons were primarily discarded in landfills, and only 345,000 to 379,000 tons were recycled. By recycling old electronic products, useful materials such as glass, plastic, copper wiring - even precious metals - can be collected and re-used in the manufacture of other products. Recycling not only minimizes the amount of waste needed for disposal, it also minimizes the extraction of new raw materials from the earth and resources required for processing. Here is a [complete list](#) of all the electronics you can recycle for free in our Electronics Shed.

Working together we can whittle down our electronic waste for a better environment!

How does more efficient lighting reduce pollution?

Small easy changes make a big difference in the environment. For example, if you replace a 75-watt incandescent light bulb with a 20-watt compact fluorescent light bulb you will save, over the bulb's lifetime, around 550 kilowatt hours or nearly 500 pounds of coal, which translates to 1,300 fewer pounds of carbon dioxide and 20 fewer pounds of sulfur dioxide that will be released into the atmosphere. If you

make these changes in your home, and your Sherborn neighbors make these changes in their homes, that is a big difference in Earth's environment.

So remember:

- Energy Efficiency: CFLs use about one-quarter of the energy of traditional incandescent light bulbs. And now these bulbs come in a wide range of sizes. They also produce different kinds of high quality lighting for different places around your home, inside and outside also.
- Cost: Because CFLs use only about a fourth of the energy of an incandescent, you save money on your electric bill. The initial purchase price of a CFL will be greater than an incandescent, but it lasts about ten times longer than an incandescent bulb. In the long run, you will save money and your own energy because you won't be changing your light bulbs so often.
- Safety: CFLs produce the same amount of light as their incandescent counterparts, using significantly less energy. That means they also generate less heat and won't burn you like incandescent lights can.
- Environment: Power plants that generate electricity also produce pollution. But if you use CFLs, you can help reduce that pollution without sacrificing your lighting needs. They use less electricity to produce the same amount of light as incandescent light bulbs. Some companies are even turning to "daylighting", which means they are introducing skylights for daytime lighting so that they are using less electricity for daytime lighting. Reducing the amount of electricity we use, whether with CFLs or a combination of daylighting and CFLs, also reduces the amount of pollution that we produce.

In 2007 during the Bush Administration, Congress passed the Energy Independence and Security Act calling for all new general purpose bulbs to be 30% more efficient than standard incandescent by 2012 (for 100-watt bulbs). There are a number of bulbs that now meet this requirement, including the CFL. However, in the climate of partisan polarization that exists now, this law has come under fire.

What do I do with leftover medicines?

In May 2012, the Sherborn Police Department got its own lock box for residents to bring unwanted prescription drugs with no questions asked. Now when you find that children have moved out and left a medicine cabinet full of unwanted medicines, you will have a safe way to dispose of them. Or if a loved one dies, you can safely clean out the medicine cabinet and bring everything to the lock box for safe disposal. There will be no chance that a neighborhood pet can get sickened from eating these medicines from trash left out on trash day. Or that they might contaminate our septic systems and groundwater after going into the toilet.

Importance of the Matter

There's a lot of controversy surrounding the issue of flushing any drug. A 2008 investigation by The Associated Press found that 250 million pounds of pharmaceuticals are flushed each year by hospitals and long-term care facilities.

There's a notable presence of pharmaceutical substances in our drinking water. In 2008, a CNN report found that, "A vast array of pharmaceuticals - including antibiotics, anti-convulsant, mood stabilizers and sex hormones - have been found in the drinking water supplies of at least 41 million Americans."

What does that mean for us? According to the EPA, studies have shown that pharmaceuticals are present in our nation's waterbodies, some causing ecological harm. However, to date, scientists have found no evidence of detrimental effects on human health. Although scientists to date have found no evidence of adverse human health effects from pharmaceutical residues in the environment. Nonetheless, the FDA does not want to add drug residues into water systems unnecessarily. The agency reviewed its drug labels to identify products with disposal directions recommending flushing or disposal down the sink. This continuously revised listing can be found at [FDA's Web page on Disposal of Unused Medicines](#).

What should I do with my plastic bags?

We have no outlet for plastic bags. Please take plastic bags to a supermarket or department store with a plastic bag recycling program such as Market Basket, Roche Brothers, Shaw's, Walmart, Target, and others.

Here is a link to [PlasticFilm Recycling](#) places that collect plastic bags.

Is there any special information related to Covid 19 or other contagious illnesses?

Please refer to CDC, state, and local health department guidelines and recommendations. While enjoying our recycling facility and transfer station facilities, we encourage residents and contractors to take reasonable and prudent health protection measures as necessary. Please protect yourself and others from sharing the latest surface-transferred and airborne maladies.

RecycleSmart has a link with tips to [Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Compost](#) with some interesting suggestions and tips for things to do at home, ways to save, how to dispose of used personal protective equipment (PPE) and more!

Scan the QR code to visit the [Sherborn Recycling Committee Website](#) for more information:

