

Holiday Tips from U-Cycle



Reduce and Reuse

- Household waste increases more than 25% between Thanksgiving and New Year's in the U.S. – This adds up to an additional one million tons of waste generated nationally during the holiday season. How can you reduce packaging waste? Reuse gift wrap from last season, use the Sunday comics to wrap gifts, or wrap a gift within a gift (such as a scarf to wrap a book). Buy in bulk. Reuse ribbons and bows. Every year 38,000 miles of ribbon is thrown away...more than the circumference of the Earth!
- Don't purchase more food than can be eaten. Nearly 28 billion pounds of edible food is wasted every year in the U.S.
- Use rechargeable batteries for electronics and toys. The average American uses 8 single-use batteries per year. For those new electronic gadgets or toys consider purchasing rechargeable batteries and a charger. Rechargeable batteries can be recharged and reused hundreds of times. Nearly 3 billion single-use batteries, mainly alkaline, are sold in the U.S. each year, and the majority end up in the garbage. Fortunately, Urbana has five battery recycling drop-off locations for both single-use and rechargeable batteries. For locations and recycling requirements, visit the City of Urbana's website under U-Cycle and click on "Battery Recycling."
- Don't throw away holiday string lights! Local businesses such as Habitat for Humanity Restore, Lowe's, Marco Steel and Mack's Twin City Recycling will recycle those lights. Call those locations for more details. And if you need to purchase new holiday lights consider LED lights which use on average 95% less energy than traditional, incandescent bulbs. LED lights can also save up to 90% in utility costs, operate at cooler temperatures and are brighter than traditional incandescent bulbs. Also, remember to put holiday lights on a timer so you aren't wasting energy.
- Use reusable bags while doing your holiday shopping. Decline bags when purchasing one or two items. Reuse or recycle plastic shopping bags if you acquire any.
- Make homemade greeting cards. An estimated 2.6 billion holiday cards are sold each year in the U.S. – enough to fill a football stadium 10 stories high! And this amount of cards requires the harvesting of nearly 300,000 trees. Or consider sending electronic greeting cards. If you do purchase holiday cards, make sure they have greater than 30%

post-consumer recycled content and encourage recipients to recycle or reuse the cards after the holidays.

- After the holidays box up unwanted items and donate them to Goodwill, Salvation Army or other donation centers. Check with donation centers to find out what items they will accept.

Recycle

- Continue to participate in the City of Urbana's U-Cycle program! All those beverage containers from holiday gatherings can be easily recycled, along with the catalogs, junk mail and magazines that are mailed out during the holiday season. U-Cycle can't accept holiday gift wrap, bows or ribbons, but they can be reused. For information about the U-Cycle program call (217) 384-2302.
- Remember to recycle electronics! It's the law. Beginning on January 1, electronics such as TVs, computers, printers and more will be banned from Illinois landfills. They must be recycled. There are local recycling options. Contact U-Cycle for a list of those locations or visit the City of Urbana's website for more information.
- After the holidays, recycle your cut holiday tree in Urbana's tree recycling program. The City of Urbana offers free curbside collection of trees during the weeks of January 2 and 9 on your regular U-Cycle collection day.

Use Less Energy

- Use less energy this winter and holiday season. For every degree you lower your thermostat in the 60-70 degree range, you will save up to 5% on heating costs. Replace furnace filters monthly. Dirty filters restrict airflow and increase energy use. Reduce hot water temperatures. Set the water heater to the "normal" setting or at 120 degrees for optimum energy efficiency. Seal air drafts around the home. Caulk leaks around windows and doors. If purchasing a new appliance or electronic, look for devices with the "Energy Star" logo on it. Energy Star products reduce energy use by 30-50%. A typical household equipped with Energy Star products can reduce its annual electricity bill by approximately \$400.

Sources: U.S. EPA, Illinois EPA, Union of Concerned Scientists, California Energy Commission, U.S. Department of Energy