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WASTE MANAGEMENT OFFERS IDEAS FOR REDUCING WASTE AT THE HOLIDAYS

Creativity Can Save Energy, Improve Environment

Ottawa - Dec. 04, 2009 – The traditional song calls for people to dream of a white Christmas, but for the conscientious consumer, it can also be a green holiday season. No matter what holiday you celebrate, you can take steps to reduce the annual increase in waste created between Christmas and the New Year.

“If each of us took a few small steps to reduce the waste we produce or increase the amount of materials we recycle during the holidays, we’d save a tremendous amount of materials, energy and landfill space,” said Ross Wallace, Site Manager of the Ottawa Waste Management Facility. “There is no shortage of ways to cut down on wastefulness at the holidays.”

Composting can reduce the amount of organic waste produced in the home. Holiday meal preparation can generate a large amount of potato peels, fruit rinds, coffee grinds, other vegetable waste and eggshells that can be composted. Compost piles are easy to create and the City of Ottawa has initiated the Green Bin Program in our region, and over 220,000 homes will be receiving a new bin by 2010. Should you have any questions regarding this new program, please contact the City of Ottawa (3-1-1).

For the even more ambitious recycler, consider giving them the gift of vermiculture: indoor recycling that uses worms to digest organic waste and create a rich compost that can be used in the garden or in your houseplants. For more information please visit the following sites: www.wormcomposting.ca or www.thewormfactory.ca.

If you have a fresh tree, garland or wreaths, be sure to recycle them when the holidays are over. Check with your municipal office about tree collection schedules. If you live in a rural or less-densely developed area, trees can be placed in an out-of-the-way spot and will create habitat for wildlife.

If getting your holiday decorations out of storage makes you ask yourself where you’ll find space to put them away in January, maybe it’s time to clean out the attic or basement. Before you throw things away and therefore miss opportunities to recycle, consider whether an item still has a service life and is acceptable for donation to our new Habitat for Humanity Drop off Center (located at 2383 Carp Rd) or the Ottawa Mission (collection bins at the Residential Recycling Center – 2301 Carp rd) or any other charitable organization.

Here are other ways to make this holiday season greener:

- Many products are made from recycled or organic content that make great gifts – look for bags or fleece clothing made from recycled plastic bottles or organic cotton T-shirts or other apparel. Many

online and catalog retailers sell these types of products. Whatever you give, be sure to buy durable, reusable products that will last a long time.

- Give potted plants, flowers or trees that the recipient can plant in the garden or yard – not only will it be a gift that continues to be a beautiful reminder of the holidays throughout the year, but it will also provide benefits to the environment by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen into the air.
- Thousands of paper and plastic shopping bags end up in landfills every year. Reduce the number of bags thrown out by bringing reusable cloth bags for holiday gift shopping. Tell store clerks you don't need a bag for small or oversized purchases.
- When packaging gifts, consider reduced or no-waste wrapping options. Put a reusable bow on the gift; place the gift in a reusable bag such as a backpack or purse; or package small, themed gifts in a larger item – such as plates or tableware in placemats or a tablecloth or kitchen utensils in an apron or decorative dishtowel. Also, you can use last year's wrapping as packaging material.
- Make your own wrapping paper by using old maps, posters or pages from the newspaper or magazines. Recycled-content wrapping paper is also available. Save bags and bows to use again and be sure to recycle the newspapers or brown paper shopping bags after the gift is opened, or use it for padding when shipping gifts.
- If you are attending a party or dinner and are bringing a dish for the meal or an edible gift for the host, be sure to package it in a reusable container. If the item is a gift, place it on a decorative holiday plate, in a washable kitchen container or wrap it with a holiday towel.
- Use e-mail for your holiday greetings – it's a great way to share photos and keep in touch more frequently and saves paper and postage. If you send cards, make them with last year's cards or wrapping paper. (Check out the WM Ottawa online Greeting Card: <http://www.wm.com/wmjingletrucks/ottawa/>)
- When entertaining, use washable utensils, plates, glasses, napkins and table coverings. Decorate with potted plants (that your guests may take home and plant) or candles. Be sure to have containers available where your guests can put recyclable cans and bottles. If you have leftover food, send it home with your guests in reusable containers or donate it to a local homeless shelter or soup kitchen.
- Consider giving no-waste gifts, such as music or sports lessons, memberships to a gym, the philharmonic or a museum, favors like babysitting or tickets to a sporting event or concert. Find out the gift recipient's favorite charity and make a donation in his or her honor, or commit to volunteering with that organization.

With a little imagination and commitment, we can use this holiday season to create new traditions that help preserve the environment.

For more information about Waste Management's comprehensive list of recycling services, visit www.wastemanagementottawa.ca or www.thinkgreenfromhome.com.

About Waste Management

Waste Management, based in Houston, Texas, is the leading provider of comprehensive waste management services in North America. Our subsidiaries provide collection, transfer, recycling and resource recovery, and disposal services. We are also a leading developer, operator and owner of waste-to-energy facilities in the United States. Our customers include residential, commercial, industrial, and municipal customers throughout North America. To learn more visit www.wm.com, www.wastemanagementottawa.ca, www.thinkgreen.com.