



**For Immediate Release**

Candice Steelman  
PIO, MCAG  
(209) 723-3153, ext. 308  
Candice.Steelman@mcagov.org

## **Most Christmas “Trash” Can Be Recycled**

**Merced, Calif., December 22, 2008** – The holiday season often means out with the old, in with the new. Most of the “old” can be recycled, then turned into something new and useful. Here are some tips from MCAG’s Recycling Specialist, Jenny Halpin.

All tissue paper, gift bags, flattened cardboard boxes and wrapping paper, except the metallic kind, can be placed in the curbside recycling can or dropped off for free to either of the two County landfills. Ribbon can be kept for use in future presents; otherwise, it should be thrown away to avoid causing damage to recycling machinery.

Bubble wrap and Styrofoam peanuts can be kept for other packaging occasions, or they may be donated to shipping businesses, such as the UPS Store. Otherwise, these items go into the garbage can. Shredded paper, which may also be used as packaging for those fragile gifts, can be recycled by placing it into a paper bag and putting it into the curbside recycling can.

Sometimes people receive new computers, TVs, or other electronics for Christmas. The old ones can be taken to the electronic drop off centers, located in front of the two landfills. If the electronics are still working and in good shape, donate them to charities. Do not throw old electronics away. They contain hazardous materials like lead, cadmium, and mercury which are harmful to humans and can leach into underground water sources.

Old mobile phones can be turned into AT&T at the Merced Mall or to Best Buy, Bread of Life Ministries in Los Banos, Goodwill, Staples, or Walmart. Mobile phones that have a charger can be donated to the Area Agency on Aging. These phones are given to seniors to allow them to make emergency 911 calls.

Take old batteries to the Household Hazardous Waste Facility for free. This is located in front of the Highway 59 landfill. If the batteries are rechargeable, you can take them to any

Radio Shack. Best Buy and Target accept NiCad batteries (the batteries found in things such as toys and watches).

Home Depot accepts old, spent Compact Fluorescent Lights (CFLs) for free at their returns desk. These lights are energy-efficient and last for years, but contain small amounts of mercury, so are considered hazardous waste. The orange recycle bins are located near the refunds counter at all Home Depot stores.

As for the Christmas tree, First, remove the tree stand, nails, metal spikes, lights, ornaments, and as much tinsel as possible from the tree. Next, if you have a green waste container in Atwater, Los Banos, Merced, or County of Merced, cut the tree into 3-foot sections and place them into the container. The tree pieces may not stick out of the containers.

Gustine residents may place trees in front of their houses (but not in the alleys) on normal garbage pick up days the first two weeks after Christmas. Trees need to be free of lights, ornaments and metal stands; wood stands may remain attached to the tree. All trees must be a minimum of 6 feet from an obstruction, including cars, garbage cans, and miscellaneous debris.

Dos Palos and Livingston residents should contact their city's public works department to ask about a tree pickup program.

For more information, go to the MCAG recycling website at [www.MercedRecycles.com](http://www.MercedRecycles.com) or call the MCAG Recycling Specialist at 209-723-3153 ext. 315.

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MCAG is an association of city and county governments, with members who meet to discuss and solve problems of regional interest. More information can be found at [www.mcagov.org](http://www.mcagov.org) or by calling (209) 723-3153, ext. 308.