

PRESS RELEASE

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Greig Smith Council District 12



LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCILMAN GREIG SMITH

Councilman Smith Introduces Motion to Clarify State Trash Rules After Deadline

Los Angeles - Councilman Greig Smith introduced a motion Friday, March 17, directing the Bureau of Sanitation to report on what it has done to accommodate the diversion, recycling and eventual disposal of household waste containing toxic materials in light of a new State ban on such items from the regular trash.

According to the California law, starting Feb. 8, 2006, households and small businesses are not allowed to throw items into the regular trash that contain toxic materials, including electronic devices, fluorescent light bulbs and batteries, etc. (See the list of banned items below.) These items contain substances such as mercury, lead, acid, zinc, cadmium, or other corrosive or flammable toxins that can contaminate groundwater and cause disease, or environmental damage if they go into the regular trash.

The law was passed in 2001, but California cities were given five years to prepare recycling, diversion and eventual disposal methods, and conduct outreach and education in advance of the Feb. 8, 2006 deadline. However, the public is still largely unaware of the new rules.

“For this law to be effective, people need to know about it and the City has to have systems to enable people to comply with the rules,” Councilman Smith said.

Universal waste includes:

- Common batteries: These batteries contain toxic heavy metals such as cadmium and corrosive chemicals.
- Fluorescent light bulbs and lamps containing mercury: Fluorescent light tubes and bulbs, high-intensity discharge (HID), metal halide, sodium and neon bulbs all contain mercury vapors. Mercury can cause illnesses and nerve damage.
- Thermostats, thermometers and novelty items that play music or shoes with lighted soles, and certain maze games contain mercury.
- Electronic devices: Anything with a microchip in it contains lead, cadmium, chromium, and copper.
- Pilot light sensors, electric switches, barometers, blood pressure devices, stoves, ovens, water heaters, space heaters, clothes dryers, and furnaces frequently use mercury switches.
- Aerosol cans marked "flammable" or "toxic," can not go into the regular trash unless completely empty.

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