

Banned from landfills

[Sarah Campbell](#)

2009-10-01 18:31:20

North Carolinians should think twice before tossing their plastic bottles into the trash.

A new state law that went into effect Thursday prohibits the disposal of rigid plastic containers, wooden pallets and motor vehicles filters in landfills.

“Widespread compliance with the plastic bottle disposal ban will ensure a flow of plastic bottles to meet market demand for the materials,” Scott Mouw, environmental supervisor for the state Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance, said.

Only about 18 percent of plastic bottles are currently being recycled by the state’s residents, according to the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Kim Fodham, Lenoir County landfill manager, said there are nine recycling and roll-off sites located throughout the county. She said plastic bottles will be accepted at all sites, but wooden pallets and oil filters must be taken to the county landfill site located at 2949 Hodges Farm Road in La Grange.

Fodham added that it’s a common misconception that oil filters need to be drained and crushed before being brought to the site, something she said is simply not true.

“Right now, we’re just trying to get everybody on the same page,” she said. “Most people recycle, most people follow the rules.”

Doug Dail, site manager at the recycling and roll off site located at 475 Fairground Road, said about 75 percent of those visiting the site make an effort to recycle.

“If everybody would follow the rules, we wouldn’t have a problem at all,” he said. “You’ve got some good people and some that will not follow the rules.

Dail spends his day monitoring the site, making sure people are not disobeying laws regarding banned materials.

“There are a lot of conscientious people who will go out of their way to recycle,” he said.

Greene County is home to six convenience sites where residents can sort recyclable materials and garbage.

“We’ve been recycling plastic bottles for 10 years and we will keep encouraging people to recycle,” Greene County Public Works Director David Jones said.

He believes the new law will increase the amount of recycling in the county, but admits enforcement will be tricky.

“It would be impossible to monitor every piece of trash that comes through the sites,” he said.

The N.C. Division of Waste Management will apply enforcement of banned materials primarily at disposal facilities such as landfills and transfer stations, rather than concentrating on individuals.

Discarded computer equipment and TVs will join the long list of banned items, which already includes antifreeze, aluminum cans and lead-acid batteries, beginning Jan. 1, 2011.

“We encourage North Carolinians to help these disposal bans succeed by expanding and starting new recycling efforts,” Dee Freeman, secretary of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, said. “Recycling is a proven job creator in N.C. and if we do our best to recycle newly banned materials we will not only grow businesses in the state, but also protect disposal capacity, recover valuable resources, save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

More than 14,000 people are employed through the state’s recycling industry, according to NCDENR. The addition of new items to the banned list is expected to help conserve energy and spur job creation.

Sarah Campbell can be reached at 252-559-1076 or scampbell@freedomenc.com.

Did you know?

- Producing new plastic from recycled material uses only two-thirds of the energy required to manufacture it from raw materials.
- North Carolinians throw away more than \$41,411,600 in plastic each year.
- Every 17.3 seconds, North Carolinians throw away enough plastic bottles to reach the height of the Bank of America Building in Charlotte.
- Every 1.3 minutes, North Carolinians throw away enough plastic bottles to reach the distance of the first Wright Brothers’ flight.
- Every week, North Carolinians throw away enough plastic bottles to line the Outer Banks 28 times.

Source: North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources