



April 2002 is
Waste-Free Month!
No More Junk Mail!

Did you know that 680 million pieces of mail are delivered every day in the U.S.? That adds up to over 11 billion pounds of mail a year, half of which is never even opened! It takes 62 million trees and 28 billion gallons of water to create this mail.

The Environmental Forum of Marin encourages you to start taking the following steps during the month of April to reduce your junk mail:

- 1. General Junk Mail:** By contacting the Direct Marketing Association, you can be removed from many companies' mass marketing mailing lists for up to five years. Write a separate postcard or letter for each member of your family who receives junk mail. On each, note the full name and address along with a request to "activate the preference service". Mail to:
*DMA Mail Preference Service
P.O. Box 9008
Farmingdale, New York 11735-9008*
- 2. Specific Mailings:** To stop receiving mail from the following companies, call their toll-free numbers during business hours. Provide the name and address they used to send you the mailing.
 - **Val-Pak Coupons:** 1-800-676-6878.
 - **America Online Discs:** 1-800-827-6364
 - **Publisher's Clearinghouse Sweepstakes:** 1-800-645-9242
- 3. Local Business & Supermarket Fliers:** Every loose-leaf bundle of fliers must be delivered along with an address postcard. Locate this address card - the cards usually have an advertisement and a photograph of a missing child (**ADVO** is the most common). Mail the address card to the address printed on the card and ask to be removed from their mailing list. Your letter carrier's routine is to give each house a bundle of fliers, so, once you stop receiving the address card(s), tape a "No Bulk Mail" sign inside your mailbox.

4. **Credit Offers:** To stop receiving unsolicited credit card and other credit related offers, gather your current address, other addresses from the last two years, and security number(s) then call toll-free 1-888-567-8688 (24 hours a day). Make a separate phone call for each social security number. Listen to all options before making your selection (the last option mentioned lets you remove your name from the list permanently). A letter will be mailed asking you to confirm your request.
5. **All Other Unwanted Mail:** Two effective steps:
 - ✓ Get off Vendor Distribution Lists: Your credit card company probably sells your name the most often. Call and ask them to stop. Also make the same request to your bank and any other companies from which you purchase products or services on a regular basis (for example, companies who sell you magazines, phone service, groceries, and gas & electric services).
 - ✓ Stop "Solicited" Mailings (i.e., from companies from which you have purchased products or services): Create a place to store all unwanted mail. Once a month, call the local or toll-free numbers on the mailings and ask to be removed from their mailing lists (toll-free area codes are 800, 888, 877, or 866). This is the quickest way to get off mailing lists. If there isn't a local or toll-free number but there is a postage-paid return envelope, tear off the mailing label and enclose it in the envelope along with a request to be removed from their mailing list. Mark envelope "ATTN: Customer Service". This method doesn't work as well as calling. Another option: If the mail is stamped "First Class", cross out your address and the bar code, circle the first class postage and write "refused: return to sender". Drop it in any mailbox and it will be returned to the sender. Do not do this with mail that wasn't sent first class - it would be thrown out at the post office. This option also won't work as well as calling.

Don't forget to recycle all unwanted mail (rip out the plastic windows on the envelopes first). It's a good idea to rip any credit card offers in half before recycling.

Other Tips:

- ✓ Whenever you donate money, order a product or service, or fill out a warranty card, write in large letters, "Please do not sell my name or address". Most organizations will properly mark your name in their computer.
- ✓ Product warranty cards are often used to collect information on your habits and income, for the sole purpose of targeting direct mail. They are not required in most situations - avoid sending them.
- ✓ Avoid filling out "Contest" cards – these are almost always fishing expeditions for names.

The Environmental Forum of Marin sponsors Earth Day 2002 Waste-Free Month. We welcome your comments or questions: communitydevelopment@MarinEFM.org. Please visit the Environmental Forum of Marin's web site at www.MarinEFM.org. Sources: www.obviously.com/junkmail, www.stopjunk.com, Municipal Solid Waste in the United States: 1999 Facts and Figures, U.S. EPA (2001)