## **RECYCLING:** Dumping and contamination are a problem at center

Continued from page 1

engage in "wishful recycling" — putting inappropriate materials in bins wishing or hoping that it will get recycled.

The biggest direct impact on city staff is dealing with illegal dumping.

"What's killing us is the hazardous waste," said Wanda Braughton, maintenance supervisor with the City Public Works Department.

People are leaving antifreeze and a lot of paint at the site — where it doesn't belong. That means a work crew has to gather it up, load it into a trailer and haul it off to Deschutes County disposal

"We actually have to take it to the right facilities, and we're not budgeted for that," Braughton said.

Dealing with hazardous waste dumping also takes personnel away from other tasks.

"We're a very small crew," Braughton noted.

Ace Hardware in Sisters will take paint and stain only. Knott Landfill in Bend will

by China action

Problems with illegal

dumping and improper recy-

cling are not the only ones

plaguing the recycling indus-

try, which has been roiled by

a decision by China to stop

accepting post-consumer

plastics and unsorted paper.

City of Sisters, High County Disposal noted that "Until

recently, China has been

the world's largest importer

of recycled paper and plas-

tic. This announcement has

severely disrupted recycling

markets worldwide with

U.S. exports about one-

third of its recycling, and nearly half goes to China.

For decades, China has used

recyclables from around the

world to supply its manu-

facturing boom. But this

summer it declared that this

'foreign waste' includes too

many other nonrecyclable

materials that are 'dirty,'

even 'hazardous.' In a fil-

ing with the World Trade

Organization the coun-

try listed 24 kinds of solid

wastes it would ban 'to pro-

tect China's environmen-

tal interests and people's

NPR reports that "The

major impact in Oregon."

In a memo sent to the

**Recycling market roiled** 

receive hazardous materials.

Braughton noted that the Sisters center will take used motor oil — but that service is designed for individual citizens, not for commercial use.

"Businesses need to recycle their own oil," she said.

Braughton thinks that the public doesn't understand that the facility is a recycling center only.

"It's not a transfer site," she said. "It's incredible, the household garbage that's left there."

Braughton said she's been confronted with trashcans completely full of somebody's cat litter — which has to be scooped out by hand.

The recycle center is unmanned and open 24/7, which makes catching illegal dumpers a challenge. That will be changing, though. Braughton noted that the facility's security cameras are now properly operational, and the City will monitor illegal dumping and refer incidents to the sheriff's office for investigation.

The center has operated on more restricted hours before, but that didn't solve the problem of illegal dumping. People just dumped their recycling - and garbage at the locked gate, leaving it for public works to deal with.

"The garbage and recy-

cling haulers, recycled mate-

rial processors, local govern-

ment and DEQ are preparing

for different possibilities

and developing strategies to

maintain recycling collec-

tion and processing where possible," HCD reported.

to continue recycling, but to

stop "wishful recycling" -

putting an item into a recy-

cling container that doesn't

belong, assuming it will be

recycled (see related story,

*page 1).* 

Residents are encouraged



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

Sisters Recycling Center is a vital service in town — but it gets abused by dumpers.

"It's a small percentage," Braughton said of the dumpers. "And when you have a facility like that, you have to expect it. You do. Doesn't make it right."

Braughton also cited problems with people failing to break their cardboard boxes down, which uses up the allotted bin space quickly. When the bins get full, people then just dump their cardboard in the aisles.

"We spend so much time breaking down cardboard boxes and sorting out the waxed that's not acceptable," she said. "I think we've got a lot of room for cardboard if it's broken down."

A few extra minutes, a little extra effort and a little more awareness of what can and can't be recycled will go a long way toward reducing the burden on public works staff and making the recycling center more effective.

Sisters Public Works Director Paul Bertagna

acknowledged that there will always be some problems but he's hopeful that raising awareness will cut back on inappropriate recycling and dumping at the site.

"We're not going to be able to curtail the bad behavior," he said. "But maybe we can guide people who want to do the right thing."



Public Works crews have to haul away loads of paint.



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'Any items that are dirty or not on the list of materials accepted for recycling in your local market leads to contamination," HCD states. "A good mantra to follow is,

when in doubt, find out." Customers can visit www.highcountrydisposal. com and download a recycling guide that lists what items are acceptable in your blue commingle recycling cart. Recyclers are encouraged to follow the recycling guide and to remember to keep all types of plastic bags and film out of recycling carts. (See "Recycling Preparation Guide" on page



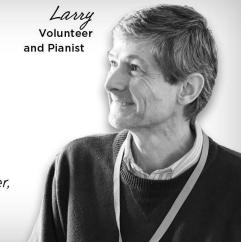
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health." The local impact remains