

If it goes down the storm drain, it ends up in our creeks

There are lots of preparations needed before a winter storm arrives, everything from making sure the roof is in good shape to not fertilizing your lawn.

What? Sure, why put something on your lawn that will just wash off into the streets and gutters? It saves you money and keeps our waterways clean.

All storm runoff ultimately drains into Bear Creek, Black Rascal Creek or our other natural waterways. All of us need to work to keep from polluting our waterways.

Use fertilizers and pesticides sparingly, so they don't just wash off lawns and plants.

Repair auto leaks and dispose of oil, fluids, batteries and other components the correct way. We don't want that stuff washing into our creeks.

Clean up after your pet. This is a leading



cause of polluted water in some communities and it creates health hazards as well.

Use a commercial car wash, or wash your vehicle on your lawn or other unpaved surface so the soapy water can biodegrade.

Clean up indoors after painting, not outdoors. Outside it can run off and end up in our creeks. We want to keep them clean!

Sand bags and materials available throughout City

Sand has been stockpiled around the City in case of storm-related emergencies. Sandbags are available at the Central Fire Station, 99 E. 16th St. Residents need to bring a shovel and load the sand themselves. Sand is located 24/7 at:

- * Loughborough Dr. & R St. (By the 7-11 Store)
- * Parsons Ave. & Brookdale Dr.
- * Parsons Ave. & Oregon Dr.
- * 200 block of W. 15th St. (Behind Merced Motor Sports)
- * Cooper Ave. & N. Highway 59 (Behind 84 Lumber)
- * W.N. Bear Creek & Shadow Brook Dr.
- * E. Santa Fe & Green St.
- * East Side of Mansionette (Between Kingfisher & Cormorant)
- * Campus Dr. & Line Dr. (West of G Street)
- * W. 24th & K St. (Amtrak Station)

Ask the City: A drop box would be nice, and unblocked sidewalks, too

"Ask the City" is a way to publicly answer some of the questions we receive. People can reach us by using the "I Want to ... Send Feedback" link on the City homepage, Newsletter@CityofMerced.org or write to the Newsletter using the address on the next page.

I want to know what is the City Code re: parking RVs and boats on driveways? Obstruction of view of traffic is my concern and secondly they are eyesores to the community. MC, Merced

Our Code Enforcement specialists get this question frequently. They say: An RV or boat/trailer is the same as a car. It must be operational and currently licensed for use on public streets. It may not block or partially block a sidewalk.

If a citizen feels that a vehicle is creating a traffic hazard by restricting visibility, they may contact the Police Department and have an officer assess the situation.

As far as an ordinance prohibiting storage of recreational vehicles on pri-

ivate property, we don't have one. A lot of subdivisions have CC&Rs (Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions on a deed) for this, but that is a civil matter, not enforceable by the City.

Buy or make a drop box (like the Post Office type) and place it in the alley way behind City Hall. That way we... can drop our payments off without the hassles of finding a place to park in front of the building or a block away.

This would be a great help for those of us who are disabled. The City of Dos Palos has this system and when I lived there it worked very well. DC, Merced

There is a Post Office box in plain view in front of the Civic Center that has been vandalized. There are concerns that putting one in the alley with low public visibility would only invite more vandalism and theft and possible destruction of people's payments.

The Finance Department has been trying to get people out of their cars by

providing other ways to make payments besides in person or by mail.

We have Click2Gov, an online service that can set up an automatic payment plan. Home banking is another option. People also can call the Finance Department to pay with a credit card.

On Dec. 4, the Council held a public hearing... Please guide us on how to find those minutes. BR, Merced

All draft Council minutes are posted on our Web site prior to City Council approval.

They also are available for viewing at the City Clerk's Office on the first floor of the Civic Center.

On the left side of the City's home page, www.CityofMerced.org, is a link to minutes and agendas going back to 2004. Last year, the City began posting the complete agenda information online, with all the background materials, maps and photos included in the agenda packets given to the City Council and media.

Merced City Council

Mayor Ellie Wooten
 Mayor Pro Tem John Carlisle
 Council members:
 Joe Cortez
 Michele Gabriault-Acosta
 Noah Lor
 Jim Sanders
 Bill Spriggs

Council meetings

The Council usually meets on the first and third Monday of the month at 7 p.m. in the Council Chambers in the Civic Center. The agenda is posted online at www.CityofMerced.org.

Holiday

City offices will be closed on Monday, Feb. 18, in honor of President's Day. The City Council will meet on Tuesday at 7 p.m. Refuse collection will not be affected by the holiday.

Contacting us

The City of Merced Web site, www.CityofMerced.org, contains City Council information, the Municipal Code and General Plan and other information. To contact the Newsletter, e-mail newsletter@CityofMerced.org, call the Public Information Office at 385-6232 or write:
 Merced Civic Center
 678 W. 18th St.
 Merced CA 95340

The Civic Center is open Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-5 p.m., except holidays.

Call us

City Council	385-6834
City Manager	385-6834
City Attorney	385-6868
City Clerk	385-6866
Airport	385-6873
Code Enforcement.....	385-6855
Finance	385-4718
Inspection Services	385-6861
Personnel	385-6839
Planning Department.....	385-6858
Public Works (7:30-4:30) ...	385-6800
After hours	385-6905
Recreation/Parks	385-6855

**IN AN EMERGENCY
 DIAL 911**

Fire Department.....	385-6891
Police Department	385-6912

Rates up because of state requirements

The bills for City of Merced water and sewer customers increased in January to cover increased costs of operations.

Sewer rates went up because the State Regional Water Quality Control Board has increased the standards for discharge waters to meet federal requirements.

Now the City is required to add what is called tertiary treatment to the water before it flows into Hartley Slough.

The new standards also will require additional aeration of the effluent and a disinfection process using UV light.

The City's Wastewater



Effluent — the stuff going through the treatment plant — undergoes a number of tests as it passes through the plant.

Treatment Plant was designed in the Seventies, so it is expensive to add the new

technologies to the plant.

The higher fees are not being used to expand the capacity of the plant.

Any expansion will be paid for by new users, not current users.

Other communities in the Valley will be facing the tougher standards as they apply for new state permits.

The complete list of water and sewer rates is available on the City's web site at www.CityofMerced.org. on the Home Page, click on Municipal Code and go to Title 15: Public Service. The Public Works Department Web pages also have more detail on the plant upgrade work.

More Gang Awareness workshops

The Gang Awareness Workshops are designed to give parents and the public information on gangs, the threat they pose to the community and how to steer children away from gangs.

Photos of gang apparel, tattoos, colors and graffiti are shown to help parents recognize the signs of gang activity.

The free programs are open to the public and sponsored by the Merced Police Department and the regional Merced Community Violence Prevention & Intervention Task Force — Merced ComVIP.

Workshops are at 7 p.m., except John Muir at 6 p.m.

- Jan. 30 John Muir Elementary School, 300 W. 26th St.
- Feb. 6 Peterson Elementary School, 848 E. Donna Dr.
- Feb. 13 Reyes Elementary School, 123 S. N St.
- Feb. 20 Rivera Middle School, 945 Buena Vista Dr.
- Feb. 26 Buhach Colony High School, 1800 Buhach Road
- Feb. 27 Sheehy Elementary School, 1240 W 6th St.
- March 5 Stowell Elementary School, 251 E. 11th St.
- March 12 Tenaya Middle School, 760 W. 8th St.
- March 19 Charles Wright School, 900 E. 20th St.

Stop signs at college

The City has installed a three-way stop sign at Yosemite Avenue and Stadium Way until work is finished on traffic signals at that intersection.

Looking for a job — save this new link

The City has a new internet link that takes people straight to our online job postings.

Jobs.cityofmerced.org goes directly to a page with all of the current job openings in the City. This makes it easier to find out what is available. Job applications are on the same page.

Take steps to prevent losing home to foreclosure

If you are having trouble making your house payment, call your lender and ask for the "Work Out" desk or the "Loss Mitigation Department," where they may be able to adjust your payments.

Don't abandon your home. You can lose eligibility for some assistance programs if you move out of your home.

There are other places to get help:
 ♦The Hope Hotline any time of the

day or night to get free help at 1-888-995-HOPE or go to 995hope.org.

♦The State of California has information at <http://www.yourhome.ca.gov/> or for help in Spanish go to <http://www.sucasa.ca.gov/>.

♦FHASecure, a refinancing option for homeowners who were able to make their payments until the loans were reset, is at <http://www.fha.gov/>.