

# Daily Hampshire Gazette

## Shredding date a push for recycling

By DAN CROWLEY

Staff Writer

Thursday, April 17, 2008

Northampton - Worried about someone meticulously piecing together old copies of your federal income tax returns while en route to a recycling facility? Is your human resources department trying to figure out what to do with confidential employee files it no longer needs?

No worries. A mobile shredding unit is coming to Northampton Saturday to tear apart and obliterate these and other sensitive documents for free. Participants can watch their paperwork get shredded in action, win a free paper shredder and, upon request, receive an official "certificate of destruction."

The events are timed to coincide with this week's federal tax filing deadline and to educate the public that shredded documents can and should be recycled rather than thrown away, according to Karen Bouquillon, the Department of Public Works' solid-waste supervisor.

Many people still combine shredded papers with their regular trash, she said, which translates into unnecessary financial and solid waste, environmental degradation, and lost revenues for municipalities. The event seeks to promote the recycling of shredded documents, and other paper products, instead of throwing them in the trash.

"I don't know how the misperception came about, but it's out there that shredded paper is trash," Bouquillon said. "It got entrenched in people's minds."

The paper-shredding event is part of the Mass Recycles Paper! campaign and runs from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School. The event is open to small businesses and residents throughout western Massachusetts. Similar events are being held simultaneously at Staples in Greenfield and at the Agawam Department of Public Works.

Area residents who wish to part ways with documents containing highly personal information, such as credit card and bank statements, medical records, and old tax returns are welcome to bring up to one recycling bin full of such documents to the mobile shredding units operated by ProShred Inc., of Wilbraham.

"We want to help educate people that because of identify theft and security issues, there are some kinds of paper that you just don't want to discard into the recycling bin and recycle with care," said Bouquillon.

Small businesses are encouraged to shred and recycle legal papers, financial records, proprietary documents, customer lists, sales reports and human resources records, for example.

Martha Blair, of Northampton, began shredding documents with sensitive personal information about five years ago after her mother became a victim of identity theft. Somebody had charged \$800 in airline tickets using one of her credit card accounts. The thief was never caught, she said.

"I shred a lot of my stuff," said Blair, moments after dumping a pile of paper recycling into a compactor at the city's transfer station on Locust Street Wednesday.

Blair said she recycles some of the shredded paper, but other times, she'll give some to her sister-in-law, who uses it to start her woodstove. Using shredded paper to jump-start home heating systems is not uncommon in western Massachusetts, though experts in the solid-waste industry say recycling the material is the preferred method of disposal.

"There is a lot of paper being burned privately," Bouquillon said.

Leo Goyette, of Florence, said that while he will occasionally throw shredded paper in with the trash, he has been an ardent recycler of paper nonetheless.

"I think it's the right thing to do," said Goyette, as he tossed an armful of paper products into the Locust Street compactor.

A public-private partnership that now includes 60 cities and towns, the Mass Recycles Paper campaign kicked off in November with the goal of recycling 1 million tons of paper - the amount usually buried or burned each year in Massachusetts. State environmental regulators estimate that more than 1.5 million tons of paper is thrown away annually in the commonwealth at a cost of \$100 million in disposal or tip fees.

"That's an avoidable cost," said Claire Sullivan, chairwoman of the Mass Recycles Paper steering committee and executive director of 15-town South Shore Recycling Cooperative, this week.

Sullivan calculated that 1.5 million tons of unrecycled paper is enough to fill FenwayPark to the height of the Prudential Tower in Boston. The state Department of Environmental Protection estimates that this wasted paper would be worth \$30 to \$50 million annually if it were recycled.

In addition to the environmental benefits of recycling and using less paper, the markets and pricing for scrap paper are at their longest, sustained high in 20 years resulting from huge demand at home and overseas, according to the Mass Recycles Paper. That includes shredded paper.

"We want people to understand that shredded paper is recyclable," Sullivan said. "It's still valuable. We want that stuff."

Many western Massachusetts communities transport their paper recycling to the Springfield Municipal Recycling Facility, which paid \$1.4 million to area cities and towns for its paper recycling in calendar year 2007, according to the figures provided by the Northampton Department of Public Works.

Northampton received \$97,767 of those revenues last year, up from \$66,586 the previous year - not because more people recycled paper, but because of the strong demand and pricing for recycled paper. The city generated a monthly average of 126 tons of recycled paper last year.

Northampton's paper recycling is trucked multiple times each week from its two transfer stations to the Springfield facility, after which it leaves for a paper mill in Fitchburg, which reportedly can't get enough of the materials.

"The paper markets are very, very strong right now, and we want to encourage people to recycle all they can," Bouquillon said.

## **Details on shredding day**

By DAN CROWLEY

Staff Writer

Thursday, April 17, 2008

Saturday's paper-shredding events are free and open to residents and small businesses from western Massachusetts. They are being held at the following locations from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.:

- Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, 80 Locust St. (Route 9) in Northampton;
- Staples, 259 Mohawk Trail (Route 2) in Greenfield;
- Agawam Department of Public Works, 1000 Suffield St. in Agawam.

There is a per-person shredding limit of one recycling bin full of the following papers: canceled or blank checks, credit card and bank statements, medical records, legal papers, income tax files, financial records, proprietary documents, customer lists, sales reports and human resources records. The Springfield Material Recycling Facility will raffle off a free paper shredder at each event to interested participants.

Organizers recommend visiting the Web

site <http://www.bankrate.com/brm/news/mtg/20000518h.asp> to learn about how long to keep certain financial records. For a list of what paper products can be recycled, visit [www.massrecyclespaper.org](http://www.massrecyclespaper.org). Area residents also can learn more about the Springfield Materials Recycling Facility on the Internet at [www.springfieldmrf.org](http://www.springfieldmrf.org).

For questions about the event or about recycling shredded paper, call the Northampton Department of Public Works at (413) 597-1059.