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Environment Department Asks Residents to Do Their Part During America Recycles Day on Wednesday

(Santa Fe, NM) The New Mexico Environment Department – in recognition of America Recycles Day on Wednesday – implemented a permanent program that will allow residents and state employees to recycle rechargeable batteries and used cell phones by dropping those items off at state field offices. NMED employees already recycle white paper, newspapers, bottles and cans.

NMED Secretary Ron Curry also encourages residents to recycle as NMED raises awareness for recycling in November during New Mexico Recycling Awareness month, which is a joint effort between NMED and the New Mexico Recycling Coalition.

New Mexico recycles only three percent of its trash while the national average for recycling is 32 percent, according to NMED's 2006 New Mexico Solid Waste Annual Report (www.nmenv.state.nm.us).

"We have to do better, we have to do more," Secretary Curry said. "I want environment department employees to take a step further with this program and continue to set an example for the rest of the state. I hope residents will also join in the effort. Of the approximately 3 million tons of garbage disposed of in New Mexico, we could be removing and recycling 750,000 tons of that garbage from state landfills."

NMED's Solid Waste Bureau and Environmental Health Division staff placed drop off boxes to collect rechargeable batteries and cell phones at 23 EHD field offices around the state (see attachment for locations). The new program is a partnership between NMED and the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corp. (www.rbc.org or www.call2recycle.org). RBRC will ship the recycled batteries and cell phones from EHD offices to recycling facilities for free.

NMED also recently gave recycling bins to 12 schools around New Mexico: Fairacres Elementary in Las Cruces, Our Lady of the Assumption in Albuquerque, Annunciation School in Albuquerque, La Mariposa Elementary in Santa Fe, Turquoise Trail Charter School in Santa Fe, Columbia Elementary in Las Cruces, Anansi Charter School in El Prado, Roots and Wings Community School in El Prado, EG Ross Elementary School in Albuquerque, East Mountain High School in Sandia Park, Carlos Gilbert Elementary in Santa Fe and McKinley Elementary School in Farmington.

“Recycling not only saves valuable landfill space, but also conserves energy and reduces natural resource extraction,” said English Bird, executive director of the New Mexico Recycling Coalition. “Recycling is the easiest way for an individual to make a difference for the planet. When you recycle paper, fewer trees need to be harvested. When you recycle metals, less mining occurs. And by recycling plastic you’re reducing the need for oil and natural gas.”

Residents can pledge to recycle online at www.americarecyclesday.org and become eligible to win an Alaskan cruise or Trek bicycles, which are made from recycled-content metals.

Citizens who want to form voluntary recycling programs in their cities and counties can call NMED’s Solid Waste Bureau at 827-0197. Residents who want to bring awareness to the state’s recycling challenges can join the New Mexico Recycling Coalition.

One of every three citizens in New Mexico has access to curbside service or drop-off containers to place recyclables such as paper, cardboard, glass, plastic bottles and aluminum cans. Many communities also offer a yard waste drop-off location as well as an old appliance and scrap metal recycling options (visit www.recyclenewmexico.com for more information).

For more information, call Marissa Stone, NMED Communications Director at (505) 827-0314 or (505) 231-0475 or visit <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/cpb/cpbtop.html>.

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