



Santa Cruz County
CDI - Public Works



UNIVERSAL SERVICE ORDINANCE

Frequently Asked Questions

What does “Universal Service” mean?

- The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors expanded the “Universal Service Ordinance” to align with State law. The ordinance requires all businesses and residents in Unincorporated Santa Cruz County to sign up for curbside recycling, organics, and trash collection.

When did the ordinance take effect?

- The local Universal Service Ordinance took effect on January 1, 2022, the same date as the statewide Universal Service mandate.

How do I sign up for service?

- Please call GreenWaste Recovery at (831) 426-2711.

What is the unincorporated area of Santa Cruz County?

- The Universal Service Ordinance applies to all residents and businesses located within Santa Cruz County, but outside the city limit of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville.

Why is the County doing this?

- California passed Senate Bill 1383 (SB1383: Short-Lived Climate Pollutants) to reduce the production of methane gas. Methane is a short-lived and potent greenhouse gas produced when organic waste (food & yard waste) breaks down in landfills. Beginning January 1, 2022, State law requires all County and City governments in California to provide universal service for recycling, organics and trash collection to meet the State’s climate goals. In most California cities and counties universal service is already standard practice. Businesses and residents are required to subscribe to recycling and waste service just as they are to water, sewer, and power services. This practice is proven to reduce illegal dumping, increase the diversion of organics and recyclable materials, and can lead to reduced methane production at landfills.

Can I keep hauling my own trash if I want to?

- Yes. Self-hauling is still an option, but you must apply for an exemption and pay an annual fee. To apply, go to www.santacruzcountyrecycles.org, click on “Universal Service,” print the “Universal Service Self-Haul Application Form,” fill it out, and mail it with your application fee to the address provided on the form.

How much will it cost?

- Currently the lowest rate for weekly curbside service is less than \$25.00 per month. Curbside service includes collection of trash, recycling, and organics (food & yard waste).

How does this compare to the cost of hauling it myself?

- The cost to sign up as a self-hauler is \$46 per year and the minimum charge to bring trash to the landfill or transfer station is \$27 per visit, and subject to change. Curbside service is almost always less expensive and more convenient.

Are there any other exceptions?

- Yes. Exemption is available when the property is undeveloped, vacant, or special circumstances exist. To apply, go to www.santacruzcountyrecycles.org, click on "Universal Service," print out the "Universal Service Request for Exceptions," fill it out, and mail it to address provided on form.

I live in a remote area of the County. Does this apply to me?

- Yes. The Universal Service Ordinance applies to all areas of Santa Cruz County located outside the city limits of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville.

I don't think GreenWaste Recovery will service my location, because of a narrow road, steep driveway, or other special conditions. What should I do?

- Please call GreenWaste Recovery at (831) 426-2711 to determine if curbside service is available.

Where can I get more information?

- More information is available at www.santacruzcountyrecycles.org "Universal Service," by calling GreenWaste Recovery at (831) 426-2711, or by contact Santa Cruz County Recycling and Solid Waste Services at (831) 454-2160.