



NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact:

Eco-Blok, LLC
1560-1 Newbury Road Suite 102
Newbury Park, CA 91320
(877) 600-4995 Phone
(805) 499-5797 Fax

info@eco-blok.com
www.eco-blok.com

County says tire-recycling successful

Two Winds Ranch effort gets rid of mosquito breeding spots

By Daniel Miller, dmiller@VenturaCountyStar.com

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Taking aim at West Nile virus and environmental issues, officials say they are making progress in a county tire-recycling effort.

The Ventura County Public Works tire cleanup event at Two Winds Ranch in Newbury Park last Saturday removed old tires that had been left at the ranch and also took tires from two other county locations. Later this month, the cleanup will conclude with another day of work at the ranch, the site of the city of Thousand Oaks' Public Equestrian Center.

The effort, funded by a grant from the California Integrated Waste Management Board, collected car, truck and tractor tires totaling about 27 tons, which, officials say, is the equivalent of 2,744 passenger car tires.

The tires will be recycled by a company that makes rubber products already used in the county.

Officials said the removal of the tires is an important task because they are an eyesore and create breeding grounds for mosquitos and, in turn, West Nile.

"The water gets collected in the interior of the tire, and during the day it heats up, making it a breeding ground," said Peter Kaiser, acting manager of the county Environmental and Energy Resources Division.

Also, tire fires are difficult to extinguish and create environmental problems with the release of toxic smoke.

"If a pile of tires catches fire, it's a real problem," said David Goldstein, an analyst for the county Environmental and Energy Resources Division. "It's almost impossible to put out."

Eco-Blok, a Newbury Park-based company, uses recycled tire rubber to make two products currently in use around the county. Barrier-Blok is used in the construction industry as a replacement for sandbags, and Filter-Blok is used as a storm-drain filter.

The collected tires include off-road and tractor tires removed from the public horse ranch, which is on property owned by the city of Thousand Oaks and the Conejo Recreation and Park District. A former operator of the ranch had plans to use tires as horse-feeding troughs.

"These things are extremely expensive to get rid of," Goldstein said. "When they realized they couldn't use them all and the tires were more of a burden than a benefit, there was the issue of removing them."

The other tires taken to the ranch as part of the disposal day came from a community cleanup event in the Ojai Valley community of Mira Monte -- about 500 tires -- and from the collection of tires illegally dumped in the Moorpark area -- 54 tires.

Before Eco-Blok can use the rubber, the tires first will be cut into more manageable pieces by GreenMan Technologies, an Azusa-based company.

Goldstein said tires from the cleanup day will be tracked at GreenMan to ensure they will be reconstituted for use in the county and not elsewhere.

The Barrier-Blok product is currently in use at construction sites and oil fields around the county, effectively replacing sandbags, said Emile Eid, a senior executive at Eco-Blok.

"Sandbags break down after a while," Eid said. "The products are durable and can be reused for years."

Kaiser said that, while the event was a success, he hopes people can learn how to properly dispose of their tires.

"We are hopeful people will learn to take their tires to tire dealers for disposal," Kaiser said. "Often times, people dump tires at thrift stores, the Salvation Army and the Goodwill, which places a hardship on them with their very meager budgets."

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For more information, contact:

Peter Kaiser, Ventura County Environmental & Energy Resources Division, at 289-3107

Jim Dodenhoff, Vice President of GreenMan Technologies, (626) 633-1174

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