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JBLM Directorate of Public Works Getting ahead on illegal dumping

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Directorate of Public Works

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Joint Base Lewis-McChord spends an estimated \$500,000 a year throwing away other people's trash. In order to combat this ongoing problem, JBLM Directorate of Public Works implemented an illegal dumping program in 2005.

Since then, more than 14,000 sites have been investigated, according to Greg Mason, JBLM's environmental investigator.

There are two ways illegal dumping occurs on base — dumping in the training areas and dumping in cantonment area dumpsters.

People dump large amounts of trash in the training areas — washer and dryers, leftovers from construction projects or bags of personal trash. In the cantonment area unit dumpsters, illegal dumping includes random household trash, yard waste or leaves, broken furniture and mattresses.

Even a small bag of personal trash can result in a hefty fine. In both instances, a receipt, piece of mail or a photo are often overlooked by the people illegally disposing of belongings and can provide the evidence needed to implicate them.

"A monetary claim issued by the Office of Judicial Assistance Claims Office is levied against a dumper to cover all administrative and cleanup costs," Mason said. "Over 1,200 cases have been filed since 2005. All sites are ultimately cleaned up during the fall and spring cleanup."

The fall cleanup started Monday and runs through Friday.

Much of the "garbage" illegally dumped could have been recycled in a variety of ways and the people illegally disposing of their garbage could have avoided the fines and hardship of cleaning it up. In a waste study of JBLM dumpsters, it was revealed that 75 percent of what was found could have been recycled or repurposed.

When people recycle on JBLM, not only are they doing the right thing by properly disposing of items, they're also contributing to the recycling revenue for the JBLM Qualified Recycling Program which goes directly to supporting quality of life programs for service members and families.

The staff at the Lewis Main and McChord Field recycling centers can answer recycling questions and provide additional options to curbside recycling.

Fluorescent light tubes, batteries, toner cartridges, cooking oil, glass and yard waste are among the many things the recycling center accepts. Repurposing an item is always better than recycling it so the LeMay Refuse staff display items, such as lawn mowers, furniture or moving boxes, at the entrance of the recycle center for others. They also collect reusable shoes and clothing for donation to the JBLM thrift stores.

"If it's something we think the troops might want, we keep it up front, put a 'Take me home' sticker on it, and it just flies away," said Steve Zipsnis, a LeMay Refuse employee.



Directorate of Public Works

Steve Zipsnis, left, LeMay Refuse employee, assists Allyson Kihn, a Joint Base Lewis-McChord housing resident, as she unloads her cardboard recyclables Oct. 3.



There are other options besides the recycling center. If a unit is deploying or has excess items in their barracks or dorms, JBLM Recycling Outreach can help get those items recycled or reused. Housing residents can contact their housing representatives for information on recycling options and large item or bulk trash pickup.

The JBLM Environmental Guidebook is also good resource to find recycling locations question and can be found on the Sustainable JBLM Home page.

Some items just can't be recycled, and, if this is the case, visit your closest landfill at Hawks Prairie, Hidden Valley in Puyallup or Tacoma.

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