CASTROVILLE – October 27, 2020 – Waste Management and Monterey County will launch a recycle right campaign on November 2 to coincide with the debut of WM Smart TruckSM technology for residential collections in areas of unincorporated Monterey County where Waste Management collections occur. The programs are part of an ongoing effort to increase diversion of materials away from the landfill and into sustainable recycling and organics processing streams.

The proprietary WM Smart TruckSM technology provides Waste Management the ability to photograph the contents of a recycling and yard waste cart while being serviced. These photographs provide valuable information about the materials customers are placing in their carts and will help pinpoint educational opportunities to ensure all residents recycle right.

Photographs will also determine if carts are overfilled, a leading cause of litter and storm water pollution in Monterey County.

Waste Management will begin a 30-day educational campaign November 2 to remind residents to recycle right and not to overfill their carts. During this campaign, residents will receive notifications when contamination is spotted in a recycling and/or yard waste cart or if a trash, recycling and/or yard waste cart is overfilled (overage).

After 30 days, a surcharge between $9.62 to $30.68 will be implemented for each instance of contamination or overage, following one warning. The surcharge amount is dependent on type of incident and container size. Customers will receive one warning each year before being assessed a surcharge. Warnings given prior to December 1, 2020 do not count against a customer’s warning accrual.

“It is critical that we all keep our recycling and yard waste material streams clean to foster a sustainable future for the next generation,” said Kristin Skromme, Waste Management public sector services manager. “We hope our educational campaign will result in not only continued clean streams and no surcharges, but also a litter free county in the future.”
While helping to pinpoint contamination issues, the WM Smart Truck™ technology will also provide Monterey County a head start in meeting the goals of California’s upcoming SB1383 regulations, which aim to reduce the amount of organic waste headed to the landfill. The technology collects data that will provide the city with key metrics to inform outreach and education and help meet various reporting requirements under SB 1383 draft regulations.

Residents living in unincorporated Monterey County serviced by Waste Management will receive a letter and handy recycling guide by November 2, which provides detailed information about the program and tips on how to recycle right. When a contamination or overage incident occurs, residents will receive a letter with an image showing the contamination or overage. Customers disputing a violation can call customer service where trained agents will help resolve any issues.

The importance of having a clean recycling stream was made evident several years ago when China, and other international and domestic processors of recycled materials instituted strict rules regarding the amount of contamination allowed in recycled materials. If a load of recycling is excessively contaminated, it’s diverted to the landfill instead of being processed and then made into a new material.

The same holds true for yard waste collection, which the state characterizes as organics. The State of California requires organics to have less than 1 percent of contaminants by weight for composting and finished compost to have less than .5 percent of contamination by weight. Every plastic bag, bucket and garden hose kept out of the organics stream makes a difference.

“WM’s technology will allow us and the county to focus on customers who need help recycling right. This technology will provide us an opportunity to educate and inform those customers. Unfortunately, recycling is not as easy as it used to be, but we are here to help,” Skromme said. “This is a great way to move the needle on diversion and ensure we are all working towards a sustainable future together.”