



NEWS RELEASE

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Beaufort volunteers and City remove 312 tons of junk, cleaning up neighborhoods and boosting fire safety

In the past 10 months, Beaufort residents, City crews and volunteers removed 312 tons of “stuff” from residential properties in Beaufort, eliminating fuel for fires and cleaning up the City. To put that in perspective, 312 tons is equivalent to about 42 elephants, or two blue whales, or eight fully-loaded tractor trailer rigs, or 24 fully-loaded dump trucks, or 312 VW Beetles.

In Beaufort, it is equivalent to a cleaner, safer city, said City Manager Scott Dadson.

“Everything that was removed could have caught fire and burned, potentially injuring or killing someone and causing tremendous property damage,” he said. “With the leadership of City Council, our Neighborhood Associations, the help of many volunteers and City staff, we have a City that’s much cleaner, much prettier and much safer.”

The totals from nine neighborhood clean-ups include:

- 197 tons of trash including white goods, bulky waste, lumber, and metals
- 104 tons of trees limbs, shrubs, branches and yard debris
- 11 tons of paint, tires, combustible liquids and items never indentified
- 23 vacant lots have been cleared of overgrown vegetation, improving public safety and reducing fire risk.

Another result of the Saturday clean-ups is that Beaufort’s Workers Compensation claims have decreased because firefighters, police and public works employees have less exposure to injury when responding to calls, said Dr. Kimberly T. Foxworth, director of human resources for Beaufort.

The clean-ups were done at no charge to City residents. Waste Pro, the waste collection company hired by Beaufort to handle collection of garbage, trash, yard debris and recyclables, worked with the City on the project.

Since the clean-ups began, more City residents are taking advantage of the weekly yard debris pick-up provided by Beaufort and Waste Pro as part of the monthly fee, Dadson said.

“It’s a pretty amazing story,” said Mack Cook, comptroller for Beaufort. “To think that these neighborhood associations of volunteers could partner with their city government, that our waste vendor would join the partnership, and that we’d get such a great and continuing turnout to pick up junk – just mind-boggling. And 312 tons? Tons? Incredible.”

A key part of the help in clearing lots and removing bulky items from back yards has been the Neighborhood Associations, Cook said. Organized partnerships with the City are in place in:

- Northwest Quadrant
- The Point
- Pigeon Point
- Old Commons
- Higginsonville
- Mossy Oaks
- West End.

When leaves and branches pile up on a property, or when unused and tattered furniture and other bulky goods are left in carports, they provide ready fuel for fires. Should a house start burning, firefighters must battle the original fire plus fight back the flames from the newly fueled areas.

Under the City’s solid waste removal contract with Waste Pro, in effect since August 2009, the City has focused on four key areas to improve life for residents, to improve the looks of the City, and to improve fire safety issues: garbage, recycling, yard debris and bulk goods.

Ten bags or less of yard debris – typically grass clippings or bagged leaves – will be picked up on regular garbage days if the bags are heavyweight yard bags, twisted or tied closed, Cook said. There’s a better, “greener” option, though, he said.

When there are more than 10 bags of yard debris, or branches that need removed, pick-up is done on Thursdays and Fridays using a special truck. A resident can ensure pick up of large quantities of bags or branches before the weekend by placing these items out before Thursday and calling Waste Pro at **645-4100** and requesting a pick up.

Yard debris is taken to a special soil reclamation center operated by Waste Pro where the leaves, grass and branches are burned, then mixed with soil to create compost – which in turn is used by The Greenery to improve landscaping on City property. To help facilitate efficiencies in collecting yard debris and limit fire hazards, citizens are still required to bag leaves and are discouraged from placing large piles of leaves along the streets.

“The City is trying not to put everything in the landfill,” Cook said. “We want more recycling, including turning yard debris to compost. To do this, we need the help of our community. It’s an easy system we have and we hope more people will take advantage of it.”

With help from City staff, residents can have “white goods” such as washing machines and refrigerators removed from their property, along with unused furniture and other heavy, cumbersome items.

“We have cleared generations of trash out of Beaufort’s back yards,” Cook said. “Not only does that make the place look better and improve property values, but it also makes these homes safer if a fire should ever start.”

Bulk good pick-up is done mostly on Saturdays, on an on-call basis. Residents needing the service should call Waste Pro at 645-4100 or visit the City website at www.cityofbeaufort.org for a link to request pick-up.

Under the previous bulk good pick-up system in Beaufort, residents had to physically visit City Hall, fill out paperwork and pay \$25. Then, a large dumpster would be brought to the resident’s home – but the resident had to be able to load their items into the dumpster, Cook said.

The new service, run through Waste Pro, is free to City residents. If they need help moving heavy items to the curb for pick up, they should call the Beaufort Fire Department at 525-7055.

“Our firefighters are happy to help carry bulky items to the curb, because they would rather remove debris from a house during the day and when it’s not on fire, than go into that burning house at night when all the debris is on fire,” Beaufort Fire Chief Sammy Negron said.

At the same time the firefighters move items to the curb for the resident, they’ll also help the residents with fire planning, including checking smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and reviewing a fire exit plan.

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