

*Eco-Tip for 3-4-18*

### **Service, Home Laundering, or Disposables: Not Local Composting**

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Major companies providing reusable diaper service in Ventura County are based in Pasadena, Montrose, and Santa Clarita; so does the resource conservation of using reusables instead of disposable diapers exceed the environmental costs of transportation? Alternatively, does home laundering of reusable diapers reduce transportation but use too much water in comparison to the efficient industrial washers of a diaper service?

The studies cited on the web sites of diaper service companies and on public relations web pages of disposable diaper manufacturers predictably skew toward supporting sponsors, but conditions are highly dependent on variation between individual cases. Is your home already on the route of a diaper service company? Do you have a highly efficient washing machine, use cold water wash settings, and hang dry your laundry? What brand of disposable diapers would you purchase?

On that last point, a relatively new wrinkle has developed in the diaper debate. Diapers made from bamboo, corn, wood pulp, or other materials are being marketed with a claim they are “compostable.”

This too is highly dependent on location. In Ventura County, no diaper is compostable. Putting a diaper into your curbside yard waste cart will not result in it being turned into fertile soil amendment. Instead, sorters at local compost facilities will have to pick it out of the mix of yard clippings and transport it to a landfill with other contaminants. Missing it could have even worse consequences, as facilities must meet strict regulations related to health and safety.

One of the diaper service companies serving Ventura County addresses this problem by providing compostable diaper service. They deliver and collect compostables on the same route as reusables. The problem with this solution is transportation. Because no composters in our entire region accept diapers, they haul all the way to Z-Best Composting in Santa Clara County.

Regardless of which diaper option you choose, there is one important measure you can take. Empty diapers, and flush solids down a toilet. Fecal matter does not belong in a landfill or in a washing machine. Most local wastewater treatment plants compost biosolids, but none can handle diapers.