

MEETING NOTES
SINGLE USE BAG REDUCTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM

Technical Advisory Subcommittee Meeting

Wednesday, April 15, 2009, 11:00 a.m.

Department of Public Works, Environmental Programs Division, Large Conference Room

I. Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. Those in attendance were: Emiko Thompson, Nilda Gemeniano, Angie Nguyen and Christine Frias with the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works; and Ritu Sehgal with the County of Los Angeles Internal Services Department. Those who attended via conference call were: Jennifer Forkish and Judith Dunbar representing the American Chemistry Council; Nick Morell with the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County; and Matthew Dodson with the California Grocers Association.

II. Technical Advisory Program Components

a. Plastic Bag Consumption and At-Store Recycling Data

Ms. Gemeniano provided an update on the plastic bag consumption and recycling data received through the Waste Board's At-Store Recycling Program. For many of the County area stores, corporate store representatives were found to have submitted reports showing aggregate quantities rather than those attributable to specific store locations.

To demonstrate some of the technical details involved in the analyses, Ms. Gemeniano discussed some of the information that is being requested on the State forms, and how the quantities were actually reported by the stores' managements. In the purchasing section of the forms, the reporting parties are required to list contact information, locations where plastic bags are purchased, and the total amount of bags purchased. The purchase locations may be corporate distribution centers, warehouses, or individual stores.

In the recycling section of the forms, the reporting parties are required to list contact information of recycling agencies, and the quantity of film or bags collected by each agency. The recycling agencies may be direct recyclers, brokers, shippers, or other such companies. Additionally, locations where bags are collected were also reported. These collection locations are reported to be corporate distribution centers, warehouses, or individual stores.

Rather than completing both sections for purchases and recycling, some stores only reported on one section. In the recycling report form, there is an option to report on the total amount of bags and film recycled. Stores that only reported on recycled film were asked to provide a factor to be applied in calculating the amount of bags recycled. If a factor is not provided the Waste Board would apply their factor.

In order to determine consumption and recycling quantities for the County unincorporated areas, additional information from the Waste Board regarding

specific store locations, bag recycling data, and direction on obtaining unreported data is necessary.

b. Enhancing At-Store Recycling

Ms. Dunbar shared her ideas with the group on how to enhance the recycling program for plastic bags. At community events, flyers can be distributed to inform residents about the different types of recyclable plastic and film material. Stores can also help by developing a website component focused on plastic bag and film recycling. Ms. Dunbar also offered to provide some recycling bins for plastic bags, at no charge, for distribution to independent grocery stores in the unincorporated County areas that do not currently have a plastic bag recycling program. A suggestion was made to allow smaller independent stores to coordinate their plastic bag hauling by facilitating drop-off centers at member stores of the California Grocers Association.

c. Curbside Recycling Data and Programs

Ms. Gemeniano provided an update on curbside recycling data and programs. Once plastic bags are collected by stores or municipal curbside recycling programs, they may be sold directly to a recycler, or to a distribution center, broker, or shipper. Some recyclers, such as Trex located in Nevada, recycle plastic bags into decking, fencing, trimming and railing materials. Other companies such as those in China also purchase collected bags for manufacturing into new bags and other plastic products.

The American Chemistry Council is coordinating with local materials recovery facilities (MRF's) to obtain information regarding hauler provisions for collecting plastic bags in the unincorporated County areas.

III. Open Discussion on Program

Ms. Dunbar shared that many MRF's do accept plastic film and bags for recycling.

If the California Grocers Association is interested in placing a website link or article relating to Earth Month or general recycling, Public Works will review the material and may include a link in www.888CleanLA.org or www.BragAboutYourbag.com.

Mr. Morrell suggested that Public Works post on the Program website a listing of the various types of recyclable plastic products that could be placed in the at-store recycling bins, since many consumers are not aware that plastic bags can be recycling, nor aware of the various types of plastic film that could also be placed in the recycling bin.

IV. Next Steps

The next Working Group meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 20, 2009, at 2:00 p.m., at the Department of Public Works.