

MEETING NOTES
SINGLE USE BAG REDUCTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM

Technical Advisory Subcommittee Meeting

Wednesday, October 15, 2008, 2:00 p.m.

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

I. Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. Ms. Emiko Thompson of Public Works welcomed the Subcommittee members and introductions were made among attendees and phone participants.

Those in attendance were as follows: Hossam Banna, Emiko Thompson, Nilda Gemeniano, and Iwen Tseng with the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works, and Joe Maturino with City of Los Angeles. Those who attended via conference call were: Jennifer Forkish with Ek & Ek on behalf of American Chemistry Council, Robert Bateman with Roplast and California Film Extruder and Converter Association, and Burt Kumagawa with the County of Los Angeles Chief Executive Office.

II. Program Status

a. Checklists Received

Program Resource Packets were mailed to the Category 1 stores in the unincorporated County areas on August 21, 2008, along with the Store Participation Checklist and a joint letter by the County and California Grocers' Association (CGA). So far three stores mailed their checklists back. The stores are located in Florence, Compton, and East L.A. The completed checklists indicated that the stores were willing to implement most of the specified components. In addition, one store mentioned that the ideas listed in the checklist were expensive to implement for small stores, and that they were interested in finding out if the County would provide financial assistance. None of the chain supermarkets returned the checklists. Public Works will engage the stores to encourage participation by calling the stores to confirm receipt of the Packets, and then visit specific store locations.

b. Cities Participating

Currently, nine cities have joined the County's Program. All partnering cities have subscribed to the Program's electronic newsletter and received Resource Packets. Some cities plan to distribute the Packets to their stores as-is, while others plan to modify the Packet to create their own. Public Works gave a presentation to the Pomona City Council at their meeting on October 6, 2008, to encourage the City to join the Program.

III. Program Development

Action items from the January 22, 2008, Board action were tabulated and provided as Attachment 1. Items under the purview of the Technical Advisory Subcommittee include providing technical assistance on at-store recycling program set-up. Visiting stores would be a way to ensure clear signage on plastic bag recycling bins and clean plastic bags. A question was addressed to Ms. Forkish regarding permission to distribute the ACC's plastic bag recycling tool kit and signage to the stores by County staff during their site visits. Ms. Forkish answered that permission from stores would need to be first obtained, and that she will check with ACC to see if the material can be distributed.

Mr. Bateman and Ms. Forkish were asked if they knew of a way to maximize the recycled content of paper bags. Both were familiar with information regarding plastic bags but not about paper bags. Ms. Forkish informed the group that it was a matter of store preference as to which type of carryout bags they purchased. Mr. Bateman suggested that post consumer recycled content is preferred for plastic bags and that terminology should be clarified when referring to recycled content. Mr. Banna suggested that in-house research would be conducted by contacting the paper bag industry to find out prices for different types of paper bags. Ms. Forkish suggested involving retailers who purchased single use bags.

The California Integrated Waste Management Board (Waste Board) and the plastics industry were suggested to be good starting points in obtaining plastic carryout bag recycling data. Ms. Forkish stated that the information was proprietary and that the industry would not be able to find out how many bags were sold to the County unincorporated areas. The Waste Board is still in the process of compiling store reported data. Therefore, no reports have yet been published. The Disposal Reduction Methodology developed by the Working Group will be enhanced by considering additional factors.

Public Works staff will visit the stores and fill out a survey/questionnaire to help begin developing performance measurements and indicators. Store survey procedures would be reviewed by the subcommittee once developed. Store visits should be completed within six weeks after the survey procedure is approved.

Other factors such as the usage of reusable bags and recycled plastic bags can be incorporated into the Disposal Reduction Methodology. Mr. Bateman was interested in how the subcommittee would develop strategies to reduce the consumption and disposal and increase the recycling of all single use bags and maximize the post consumer recycled content of all bags provided to the public in order to help develop markets for recyclable materials and decrease use of raw materials. Certification and verification of the recycled content is very crucial.

Obtaining curbside plastic bag recycling data to be used in the methodology may be difficult. Mr. Banna suggested that the ACC be consulted in quantifying this data in addition to any waste characterization studies. Ms. Forkish suggested that Crown Disposal may be conducting such studies.

IV. Next Steps

The next Technical Advisory Subcommittee will be held on November 5, 2008, at 11:00 a.m. Ms. Thompson closed the meeting by thanking the attendees.