

MEETING NOTES
SINGLE USE BAG REDUCTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM

Store Operations Subcommittee Meeting

Wednesday, April 15, 2009, 9:00 a.m.

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

I. Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 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; Ritu Sehgal with the County of Los Angeles Department of Internal Services, Rick Crandall with Albertsons, and Alina Morshidian with City of Glendale Department of Public Works. Those who attended via conference call were: Burt Kumagawa with County of Los Angeles Chief Executive Office, and Matthew Dodson with the California Grocers Association.

II. Store Operations Program Components

a. Store Site Visits

Ms. Nguyen provided an update on the store site visits and checklists received. Since the last Working Group meeting, Public Works staff conducted additional store site visits and completed visiting all of the stores listed for the unincorporated County areas.

To date, Public Works compiled 141 checklists from stores in the unincorporated County areas. Of the 141 stores, 65 qualify as Category 1 stores while 76 do not qualify under the definitions of Category 1 stores. Of the stores that do not qualify nearly 50 percent have less than 10,000 square feet of retail space; 22 percent are no longer in business; 18 percent do not exist; 5 percent generate gross annual revenues less than \$2 million; and 5 percent are located within city jurisdictions.

For the 65 stores that did qualify as Category 1, the questionnaires indicate that 72 percent of the stores currently sell reusable bags near the checkout stand; 68 percent provide recycle bins for plastic bags; and 90 percent do not have a customer rewards program to encourage reusable bag usage.

In the event we are made aware of any additional Category 1 stores, staff will conduct additional store site visits accordingly and provide updates as necessary.

b. Store Programs and Activities

In an effort to expand program participation among stores, Ms. Thompson reported that she contacted Food 4 Less and Vons regarding the program. Upon discussing the Program, materials were provided to the Director of Store Operations of Food 4 Less, including the Program resource packet and the American Chemistry Council's plastic bag recycling outreach material.

Ms. Thompson suggested the California Grocers Association facilitate a meeting among their members to discuss the Program and its goals. A meeting would also serve as a reminder or inform store representatives about the target disposal reduction benchmarks, and the possibility of a ban in the event the benchmarks are not achieved. Mr. Dodson expressed his concurrence with such a meeting.

c. Developing Upcoming Store Training Programs

Ms. Frias suggested a plan to enhance Program implementation among stores. First, stores in the unincorporated County areas would be invited to participate in a focus group meeting to gather ideas on developing a store training program for baggers and cashiers. After reviewing the suggestions made by the focus groups, training materials would be developed and presented to store managers. For example, DVDs may be developed to train new employees and to educate customers. Stickers may also be developed to be placed at checkout stands to remind checkout clerks of bagging techniques that minimize consumption of single use bags. To motivate use of the training techniques, an employee contest or certificate program could be developed. Examples of techniques to be included in the training are: suggesting that customers carry single items in their hand or purse rather than accepting a single use bag; requesting customers to hand-carry large items, especially those that have built-in handles; asking customers if they brought their reusable bags or reminding them to bring their reusable bags during their next visit; and reminding customers about plastic bag recycling at the store.

Mr. Crandall suggested that DVDs should be within ten minutes in duration so that store representatives and customers could easily grasp the messages. He also mentioned that the group should search for any existing videos to save time and money. Mr. Kumagawa recommended that we work in consultation with the CGA and stores so that the concepts included in the DVDs are appropriate for store training purposes, and to facilitate its maximum and immediate usage by not requiring extensive editing. Mr. Dodson indicated that he would make an effort to facilitate participation by CGA member stores.

III. Open Discussion on Program

Mr. Crandall discussed Albertsons plastic bag recycling process. Each store sends their collected plastic bags to the main warehouse facility in Irvine, where they are baled and shipped to Trex, in Nevada. Trex then makes composite decking, fencing, railing, and trim materials from recycled and reclaimed wood and plastic.

Mr. Crandall also showed samples of Vons' and Ralphs' March weekly newsletters, which prominently promoted reusable bag sales with various designs. It is notable that other large grocery stores are also promoting reusable bags. Albertsons plans to heavily promote reusable bags among their customers starting the week of Earth Day.

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.