

MEETING NOTES
SINGLE USE BAG REDUCTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM

Technical Advisory Subcommittee Meeting

Tuesday, December 16, 2008, 11:00 a.m.

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

I. Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 11:21 a.m. Those in attendance were: Emiko Thompson, Nilda Gemeniano, and Christine Frias with the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works; Ritu Sehgal with the County of Los Angeles Internal Services Department; Burt Kumagawa with the County of Los Angeles Chief Executive Office; and Darrell Costello with Roplast Industries. Those who participated via conference call were Jennifer Forkish representing the American Chemistry Council; and Nick Morell with the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts.

II. Program Status

a. Checklists Received

Nineteen stores, to date have submitted their checklists which indicated that many of the larger stores already have recycling bins for plastic bags, and sell reusable bags. The checklists from smaller stores indicate they do not sell reusable bags nor have any programs that motivate customers to recycle their plastic bags.

The checklists also revealed that many stores do not have any training materials to educate their employees and customers about the environmental impacts of litter from single use bags. Many do not charge a per-bag fee, nor do they give free reusable bags as an incentive.

b. Cities Participation

The City of Azusa mailed resource packets to all of their stores that provide plastic carryout bags. The City of Glendale sent resource packets to the California Grocers Association and National Association of Chain Drug Stores, who then sent it to their member stores within the City. The City of Hermosa Beach created a committee to implement the program and to elevate participation levels.

c. Website Update

A new link was added to the "Events" page directing users to reusable bag giveaway locations as part of Heal the Bay's "A Day Without A Bag" event. Event information was added to the "Getting Involved" page including the County's proclamation of the third Thursday of December each year as "A Day Without A Bag." Links were also added in the "Resources" page to the Plastic Grocery Bag Fact Sheet by Keep California Beautiful, and also to the Reusable Plastic Bag presentation by Roplast Industries. A link to the At-Store Recycling Program of the California Integrated Waste Management Board was also added.

It was suggested that the website further define the various types of reusable bags, and to educate the public about the importance of recycling and reusing bags.

III. Program Development

a. Store Site Visits

Public Works conducted site visits to eight unincorporated area stores on December 8th and 9th. Trader Joe's had a well established reusable bag program, with visually pleasing displays and a raffle for \$10 off of the next grocery bill.

Some stores used cardboard boxes as receptacles for collecting plastic bags for recycling while other stores used more permanent bins. It was also noted that one store did not offer any paper bags and used only plastic carryout bags.

Most of the stores visited gladly accepted the outreach materials provided by the American Chemistry Council, which included bin signs and posters to help promote plastic bag recycling. These outreach materials will continue to be offered at future store visits.

b. Components Pertaining to Technical Advisory

It was reported to this subcommittee that during the earlier Store Operations Subcommittee meeting, Mr. Rick Crandall, Director of Environmental Stewardship for Albertsons, shared insightful information about their plastic bag recycling operations. According to Mr. Crandall, the plastic bags collected from the stores are packed and shipped to their distribution center, at which all of the recycled materials from their stores are collected. The plastic bags are then shipped by the distributor to a manufacturer of decking material. Mr. Crandall indicated that he is willing to work with the County by providing weight data collected from these recycled batches. Sales will be correlated to the weight data to calculate recycling figures attributable to the unincorporated County area stores. Once the County receives the information from Mr. Crandall, the recycling rate for Albertsons stores could be determined. Public Works will continue to gather data for the disposal reduction rate formula.

Ms. Thompson reported her communications with Mr. Patrick Rita, who is representing the Paper Bag Council. Mr. Rita expressed his intent to provide information about the manufacturing process of recycled content paper bags; the post-consumer recycled content of paper bags; issues with the validation of recycled content; regulations on recycled content blend paper bag manufacturing; and the paper bag recycling process.

c. Status of Proposed Contractual Services

Public Works is preparing a Scope of Work for consultant services to assist the County in the following areas: store participation, production and distribution of outreach, and technical assistance and enhancement of the disposal reduction rate methodology, and data collection. The draft Scope will be disseminated for stakeholder review upon completion.

d. Open Discussion on Program Development

Based on the store visits it was found that some stores gave their collected plastic bags to their distributor. Some stores also provided weight data of the collected plastic bags to their distributor. It was suggested that further research be done on how to incorporate such factors into the disposal reduction rate methodology formula.

IV. Next Steps

The next Working Group meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 21, 2009, at Public Works' Conference Room D.