



Memorandum

MONTEREY REGIONAL WASTE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Reviewed by Wmm Date 1/8/08
General Manager

DATE: January 8, 2008
TO: General Manager
FROM: Public Education and Recycling Manager
SUBJECT: Update on Polystyrene Fast Food Packaging and Proposed Ban

BACKGROUND

At the November 14, 2007 Litter Abatement Task Force Meeting, staff was directed to establish a subcommittee to evaluate fast food packaging, degradable packaging and the degradation of plastics in the marine environment. At the December Board Meeting, Vice Chair McCloud reiterated that a regional approach to reducing the litter impacts associated with fast food packaging will achieve greater success than actions taken by individual jurisdictions. A local environmental group has proposed a ban on the use of polystyrene fast food packaging in Pacific Grove, and also County-wide based on an ordinance developed in Santa Monica. The City of Monterey has also drafted an ordinance for future council consideration.

Stakeholder Meeting Scheduled

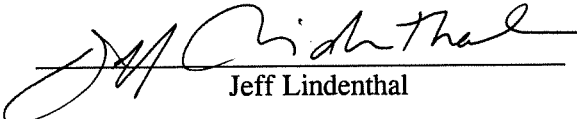
A meeting has been scheduled with stakeholders for January 16, 2008 at 10:00 a.m. at Monterey City Hall. Recognizing that outreach to the restaurant and hospitality association will be essential for program success, representatives from the Hospitality Association and the California Restaurant Association have been invited to attend. Both the Santa Monica and Monterey policies will be discussed at this meeting.

This issue has also been scheduled as an agenda item for the next County Integrated Waste Management Task Force meeting to be held on March 20, 2008.

The attached fact sheet has been developed to provide additional background on polystyrene and action that has been taken around the State.

STRATEGIC PLANNING IMPACT

A6a: Program focus on public awareness, increased diversion of organics and commercial wastes, proper management of hazardous and prohibited materials, litter abatement, and sustainability.


Jeff Lindenthal

Attachment

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Polystyrene Fact Sheet

Overview

Polystyrene (PS) is one of six plastic resins that are used to make a wide range of consumer goods and packaging. Polystyrene is utilized to make both rigid plastic items such as CD cases and plastic cutlery utensils, and “expanded” or “foamed” plastic items such as “Styrofoam” fast food packaging and packing peanuts. PS packaging, whether rigid or expanded is often coded or labeled with a number “6”.

Unlike plastic water bottles (coded #1 PET) and milk jugs (coded #2 HDPE), there is little demand for recycling PS. By nature, expanded polystyrene is light and bulky and as such is costly and inefficient to collect and transport for recycling. According to the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) “no meaningful recycling of food service PS occurs currently”. The reuse rate for PS packaging peanuts is estimated at 20-30% in California due to the number of shipping stores that accept packing peanuts for reuse.

The Problem

The CIWMB estimates the total amount of PS used for packaging and food service in California at 166,135 tons annually. Food service PS has a useful life that can be measured in minutes or hours. Yet, it takes several decades to hundreds of years to deteriorate in the environment or a landfill. The primary environmental impact of PS relates to litter and improperly disposed PS.

- Takeout food packaging has been found to be second greatest component of litter (behind tobacco products), comprising 20-30% of all litter.
- According to a California Department of Transportation study during 1998–2000, PS represented 15 percent of the total volume of litter recovered from the storm drains.
- According to the California Coastal Commission, 60-80% of marine debris overall and up to 90% of floating debris is plastic.
- Once in the environment, expanded food service PS breaks into smaller pieces that may be widely dispersed and ingested by wildlife.

California Cities with PS Packaging Bans

In an effort to combat litter problems associated with fast food packaging, a number of California jurisdictions have passed laws banning the use of expanded PS takeout packaging including:

Berkeley	Calabasas	Capitola
Emeryville	Malibu	Oakland
Pittsburg	San Francisco	Santa Monica.

Santa Cruz and the County of Santa Cruz will be taking ordinances to their elected officials for adoption early in 2008.

Proposed State Legislation: AB 904 (Mike Feuer) Plastic and Marine Debris Reduction

AB 904 (a two-year bill) proposes to address the problem of takeout food packaging litter and waste by:

- Requiring takeout food distributors to utilize packaging that is compatible with the recycling and composting options available.
- Creating incentives for packaging manufacturers to design for the environment and support the development of infrastructure and markets for the recycling or their products.