

PRESS RELEASE

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“Say NO to Plastic Bags” Campaign Targets Monterey County Shoppers on November 15, America Recycles Day

Grocery shoppers in Monterey County will be asked to “**Say NO to Plastic Bags!**” and to bring their own reusable bags to the market instead. Recycling professionals from various Monterey County agencies will focus on the issue of plastic bags as part of America Recycles Day activities, starting Nov. 15.

Many markets now only offer plastic bags, no longer asking “Paper or plastic”? Often, the bags end up as unsightly litter on roads, fences and the beach where they can pose a problem to wild life on land and in the ocean. Beginning on “America Recycles Day” (Tuesday, Nov. 15), staff from the agencies participating in the “Say NO to Plastic Bags!” campaign will be stationed at various supermarkets throughout the county to distribute free polyfiber bags. The bags to be handed out are made from recycled plastic bottles and should last for many hundreds of trips to the grocery store. The campaign will go on for the week following “America Recycles Day.”

The agencies hope that the campaign will encourage Monterey County residents to change their shopping habits and to switch to reusable bags instead of plastic. Even paper bags use up valuable resources which could be better used elsewhere or saved altogether.

The proliferation of plastic shopping bags, mostly due to their low cost and light shipping weight, has made them a problem material in the waste stream and in the environment. Several foreign countries, including Ireland, have banned plastic bags. The City of San Francisco has considered charging a fee for plastic and paper bags handed out in grocery stores.

The agencies participating in the Monterey County campaign are:

- Monterey County Health Department, Environmental Health Division, Solid Waste & Recycling Services
- Monterey Regional Waste Management District
- Salinas Valley Solid Waste Authority
- City of Monterey Recycling Program
- Waste Management, Inc.
- Monterey Disposal Services/ Tri-City Disposal Services
- BFI

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Agencies in other areas are joining the campaign, including the Santa Cruz County Recycling Program and a number of other jurisdictions throughout California.

Following are some of the facts that will be used in the “Say NO to Plastic Bags!” Campaign:

Plastic bags are a bad choice because...

- **They create litter on roads, fences & trees.**
- **They clog gutters, sewers & waterways.**
- **They are a health hazard to human babies and to hungry animals in the ocean.**
- **They use up Our Planet’s limited resources: crude oil & natural gas.**
- **We use too many— more than 90 billion in the United States every year...300/year for each adult!**
- **Only 5 percent are recycled. The rest end up in the landfill or in the environment.**
- **Every square mile of ocean has more than 20,000 pieces of plastic, taking hundreds of years to break down.**

For additional information about the campaign and location of super market sites chosen for as sites for the give-aways, please contact the Recycling Hotline at 384-5313.

Recent related news item (Nov. 2, 2005)

The City of San Francisco entered an agreement with several major grocery chains to reduce by **10 million** the number of grocery bags used at these chains. An estimated 50-150 million grocery bags are used in the in the city each year. The stores will also work together to reduce bags by spending up to \$100,000 to educate San Franciscans about recycling and to promote the use of reusable grocery bags. The City in turn will suspend the move to institute a 17-cent per bag charge at the stores. For more information, check out the SF Chronicle story at www.sfgate.com