



Waste Wise e-News

A Tool for Environmental Sustainability Resources and Networking

March 1, 2011

PLASTICS

Plastics play a crucial role in maintaining the “convenience society” we live in today. In 2009, the EPA estimates that 30 million tons of plastic waste were generated in the United States, of which 13 million tons were containers and packaging, 11 million tons were durable goods, and nearly 7 million tons were nondurable goods such as disposable plates and cups. We generally think of plastics as being “recyclable,” yet only 7 percent of the 30 million tons was actually captured for recycling.

Recyclable or not recyclable?

The recycling of any waste requires an established infrastructure – a sort of linked chain – that includes product design and manufacturing, consumer choices, active participation (discussed below), hauler and broker participation, and sustaining these markets for recycled products. Recyclability is not defined by the word “recyclable” or by the plastic number on the item. These two things do play a role in recycling, but only if the infrastructure mentioned above exists, with no chain links broken, to *actually recycle the plastics*.

Waste reduction and recycling require participation

Any waste reduction, reuse or recycling program requires active participation from those businesses and individuals who are generating the plastic waste, and equal investment from the services that collect, transport and sell the waste. Plastics are especially difficult because there are so many different types and applications, making them confusing to recycle especially in consumer/residential collections. In addition, many of them are not worth very much, providing little incentive for haulers, brokers and recyclers to collect them.

The complicated nature of plastics recycling – particularly starting from consumer generation – is not an impossible barrier to overcome. With changes in product manufacturing, cradle-to-cradle design, consumer choices and a market infrastructure, the future for plastics reduction, reuse and recycling will hopefully be a model that is sustained by all links in the chain.

IN THE NEWS

“Chinese Plastics Reclaimers to Seek Environmental Audits”

Resource Recycling News, November 23, 2010

Click [here](#) for full story.

“An Ocean of Plastics”

PBS, August 9, 2010

Click [here](#) for full story and videos.

EVENTS

Energy Efficiency and Recycling Workshop

Thursday, March 3, 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

Moose Lodge, Albert Lea

This workshop will cover several items including energy audits, grants for energy efficiency, and tax incentives and rebates. Cost is \$15, including lunch. Reservations are required by contacting the Albert Lea-

Freeborn County Chamber of Commerce, (507) 373-3938.

MEMBER SUCCESS STORY

Waste Wise member Super Radiator Coils (SRC) purchases millions of feet of precision copper tube each year for use in the heat exchangers it manufactures. Its copper tube vendor switched packaging methods so that the rolls of copper tube now arrive stretch-wrapped. Waste Wise and SRC collaborated on finding a solution that would be convenient as well as environmentally friendly. As a result, Waste Wise introduced SRC to the *It's in the Bag* program and now approximately two Gaylord boxes (one cubic yard) of compacted stretch wrap are diverted from the landfill each week. SRC also provides the opportunity for employees to bring in their plastic shopping bags, dry-cleaning protective wrap and other appropriate household plastic for *It's in the Bag*. With this program, as well as many other initiatives in place and running smoothly, SRC is continually looking for opportunities to reduce landfill waste, turn a waste material into a valuable commodity, and hopefully create a few jobs in the process. To read more about SRC's achievements, visit www.mnwastewise.org.

GRAINGER - SUSTAINABILITY AND GREEN RESOURCES

Minnesota Waste Wise member Grainger is a Fortune 500 facilities maintenance supply company that provides businesses everything they need to keep their facilities up and running. The company was recently profiled in GreenBiz.com for its sustainability efforts. To read the story, click [here](#).

To find thousands of products that can help your organization run greener facilities, check out [Grainger's Green Resources](#) page.

WASTE WISE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Visit Waste Wise on [Facebook](#), or read our blog, "[Sustainability \\$ense](#)," to stay in touch with important trends in business sustainability, read about current news and events, and participate in discussions about a variety of topics.

ENERGY SMART UPDATES

Minnesota nonprofits eligible for no-interest loans for energy improvements

Minnesota nonprofit organizations interested in reducing their energy use have a new opportunity to get no-interest loans for energy improvements to their facilities. The Center for Energy & Environment, a Minneapolis-based organization, and the Minnesota Office of Energy Security are offering 0%-interest loans up to \$25,000 to 501c(3) nonprofits in Minnesota for energy-saving projects on facilities they own or occupy. The loans can be repaid over a maximum seven-year term.

Eligible improvements include: lighting upgrades, energy control systems, building recommissioning, heating, ventilation and air-conditioning system modifications, exterior envelope improvements, motor and pump improvements and other projects with written approval from the Office of Energy Security. The improvements must carry simple paybacks of two to 10 years. New construction and expansion energy-related projects are ineligible.

Have questions about the new loan program or need help applying? Contact Waste Wise at (651) 292-4662 to get help through our Energy Smart program staff.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Thank you to our new and renewing members:

PATRON

Lindsay Window & Door (North Mankato)
Standard Iron & Wire Works Inc. (Monticello)

CORPORATE

Deluxe Corporation (Shoreview)
Landscape Structures (Delano)
Materials Processing Corporation (Mendota Heights)
Northland Aluminum Products (Minneapolis)
Spruce Tree Centre/Metro Plains Management (St. Paul)

SUPPORTER

Arctic Cat (Thief River Falls)
Bedford Technology (Worthington)

Century College (White Bear Lake)
Clow Stamping (Merrifield)
Doug's Supermarket (Warroad)
Duininck Bros Inc. (Prinsburg)
HGA Architects & Engineers (Rochester)
Honeywell (Plymouth)
Michael Robertson & Associates (Woodbury)
Murphy Warehouse Company (Minneapolis)
Northern Iron & Machine (St. Paul)
River Market Community Co-op (Stillwater)
Ruttger's Bay Lake Lodge (Deerwood)
Seward Co-op (Minneapolis)
Sico America Inc. (Minneapolis)
St. Mary's Duluth Clinic Health System (Duluth)
The Inn on Lake Superior (Duluth)

SPONSORSHIP AND ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITIES

Is your business interested in promoting its services to more than 1,000 businesses statewide? Would you like to position your business as a sustainability leader? For \$199, your business will become the sole sponsor of a monthly Waste Wise e-News edition to include premier logo placement and an advertisement. Contact Alex Keller at (651) 292-4675 or akeller@mnychamber.com to secure your sponsorship today!

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

Not a member but would like to join? Want to take full advantage of your member benefits? Contact Alex Keller at (651) 292-4675 or akeller@mnychamber.com.

Disclosure: Waste Wise e-News is a tool to inform our members of current events or waste issues. The content of Waste Wise e-News is for educational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Minnesota Waste Wise does not endorse any of the following waste services, organizations or events. Any such portrayal is unintentional by Minnesota Waste Wise.

Minnesota Waste Wise is a non-profit affiliate of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce.