

ENVIRONMENTAL BRIEFS

A Review of Recent News About Vinyl and the Environment

Expanding Plastics Recycling. Just three materials — PET, HDPE, and vinyl — represent 90 percent of the rigid plastic containers found in the municipal solid waste stream. However, according to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, recycling programs limited exclusively to PET soda bottles and HDPE milk jugs can only hope to collect 11 percent of the plastics in the waste stream. By expanding programs to include all rigid containers, that percentage can be doubled or tripled (*Plastics News*, September 9). A new pilot program underway in Nashville, Tenn., is expected to show how such an effort can be undertaken.

It's As Easy As 1,2,3. In Nashville, the city is working with Steiner-Liff Iron and Metal Co. to collect PET, HDPE and vinyl bottles from three drop-off sites located throughout the community. Steiner-Liff then separates the material for resale using new technology developed by National Recovery Technologies, Inc., also of Nashville (see following story). A concurrent community education program with the theme, "It's as easy as 1,2,3," already is producing good participation levels, program coordinators report. The pilot, which will run six months, is a joint effort of the city, Steiner-Liff, NRT and the Vinyl Institute. (*Plastics and the Environment*, September 6)

Automated Sorting System Debuts. An important part of the Nashville recycling project will be the demonstration of NRT's new VinylCycle system in a commercial setting. The VinylCycle uses proprietary technology to electromagnetically identify and eject vinyl and non-vinyl plastics separately. Researchers will be monitoring the unit's operation and conducting controlled tests under various scenarios. The Steiner-Liff unit is one of several VinylCycle systems now in place in the U.S., but it is the only one whose operation is accessible to interested parties. (*Plastics News*, September 9)

More Systems on the Horizon. VinylCycle systems are up and running in several locations in the U.S. and U.K., but NRT isn't the only player in the business. *Plastics Technology* (October) reports that Italian manufacturer Govoni Spa will showcase its new electromagnetic vinyl sortation technology soon at Enviroplast, a startup recycler in Richmond, Va. This fall will also see the debut at Embrace Systems Technologies (Angola, N.Y.) of a new system from Automated Recycling Corp. (Sarasota, Fla.). The ARC 7200 distinguishes PET bottles from HDPE and PVC by their injection-molded neck rings. Meanwhile, according to *Packaging Digest* (October), Eaglebrook Plastics (Chicago) plans to install a new recycling line developed by Magnetic Separation Systems (Nashville) that will sort commingled plastic bottles by resin type using optical-type sensors and diverters.

Vinyl Recycling in New York State. Nashville isn't the only place that has already made vinyl part of its recycling program. Oneida and Herkimer counties in upstate New York began a regional curbside recycling effort in 1989 encompassing 320,000 people in 78 municipalities. In 1991, a new regional processing facility opened and the program was expanded to include HDPE, PET and vinyl plastic. The vinyl is sorted by hand from the PET and HDPE, baled, and then shipped to Occidental Chemical Corporation, a large vinyl resin producer, which processes it for reuse. So far, nearly 10 tons of post-consumer vinyl have been diverted from the counties' landfill, according to local authorities. (*Solid Waste & Power*, August)

Curbside Collection Practical. Adding rigid plastic containers to curbside collection programs is not prohibitively expensive, according to a study commissioned by the Environment and Plastics Institute of Canada. The study found that the cost could be as low as C\$116 per metric ton (US\$92), under certain conditions. The cost of adding mixed containers to a program was not significantly higher than the cost of collecting traditional materials, the study concluded. (*Plastics News*, September 30)

Plastics Recycling Plant Announced. Vinyl Institute member Occidental Chemical has announced that construction will begin this year on what will be the largest post-consumer plastics recycling plant in Texas. The facility, to be located in the Dallas area, will have the capacity to process up to 40 million pounds of PET, HDPE and vinyl, as well as other types of plastic. The recycled vinyl will be used in the company's new EcoVinyl™ product line, which can be turned into vinyl bottles for such products as shampoo and car wax. (*Packaging Digest*, October)

Vinyl Recycling Plant Set. Hoechst AG (Frankfurt) plans to install a \$3.2 million facility to recycle vinyl packaging alongside its PVC production facility in Gendorf, Bavaria (Germany). The facility, slated for startup in 1992, is expected to be the world's first vinyl recycling plant. Hoechst said if the plant is a success, it will build a larger unit at Gendorf and at other plants around the world. (*Chemical Week*, September 25)

Please contact the Vinyl Environment Resource Center if you would like more information about any of the stories in this issue or any other matter related to vinyl and the environment. Call 1-800-969-VINYL (8469).

The Vinyl Institute is a national trade association representing the leading U.S. manufacturers of vinyl, vinyl feedstocks and additives, and vinyl film and sheet products. The Vinyl Institute is a division of SPI, The Society of the Plastics Industry, Inc.

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New Recycling Directory Published. Vinyl recycling is on the rise. Last year, the Vinyl Institute identified 43 companies in 17 states recycling vinyl. The latest numbers are 57 companies in 25 states, and they are all listed in the Vinyl Institute's new *Directory of Companies Involved in Recycling of Vinyl Plastic*. The booklet includes the name, address and phone number of each company, plus other pertinent information. For a copy, write the Vinyl Environmental Resource Center at One Cascade Plaza, 19th floor, Akron, Ohio 44308, or call 1-800-969-8469.

Swiss Turnaround. For years, Migros, Switzerland's largest retailer, has made a public commitment to stop using vinyl as a packaging material. They have apparently changed their thinking. In an interview with *Packaging Progress*, Migros' head of packaging, Mario Chillante, says, "80 percent of (Switzerland's) waste is incinerated and as yet incineration stations are not all equipped with wet gas washers to take out the harmful emissions. But once they are, our whole attitude to PVC will change. It has outstanding performance not easily matched by alternatives."

Favorable Developments in Germany. *Plastics Industry Europe* (June 1991) reports that the vinyl industry in Germany is encouraged by recent developments there. Not only is a new project to collect and recycle vinyl floorcovering off to a good start, but the German federal council (the Bundesrat) has pulled back from including in its proposed packaging regulations a ban on PVC packaging. The industry also sees vinyl recycling opportunities in the massive building reconstruction program underway in the former East Germany.



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