

SOME BASIC FACTS



Municipalities across the country are moving to establish comprehensive solid waste management programs. In the process, many questions arise as to how to handle individual components of the waste stream. This material has been produced to provide information on one of those components: vinyl plastics – otherwise known as PVC, or polyvinyl chloride.

ABOUT VINYL

Vinyl is the world's second most widely-used plastic material, found in everything from house siding and water pipe to business machine parts and wall coverings. Despite the large amount of vinyl produced, relatively little (about two and a half percent) is found in the waste stream. That's because most vinyl applications are long-term uses that are not disposed of quickly. Most vinyl found in the waste stream consists of vinyl packaging—bottles, blister packaging and flexible film. Even this amount is relatively small, equaling about five percent of all plastic packaging found in the waste stream, or less than 0.5 percent of the total waste system.

Experience has shown that vinyl wastes can be handled by all conventional processes: recycling, incineration and landfilling. No "special handling" or special precautions are

required to include vinyl in the typical solid waste management program. Here are some additional facts:

Vinyl Is Highly Recyclable and Is Being Recycled

Vinyl packaging can be easily handled in most curbside and recycling center collection programs by including it in a mixed plastics stream or a mixed container stream. Collected vinyl can then be processed with other plastics to create "commingled" products, or separated out for individual processing.

Visual identification and hand sorting of vinyl containers can be made via The Society of the Plastics Industry's voluntary coding mark (V-3) molded into many containers, or by the distinctive "smile" or "slash" mold mark unique to vinyl found on the bottom of containers. Work also is underway to develop systems that will mechanically separate vinyl packaging from a stream of mixed plastic containers. This technology, under development at the Center for Plastics Recycling Research, Rutgers University, and at National Recovery Technologies, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee, involves special scanning equipment that will identify and separate vinyl packaging based on its unique polymer composition.

Once separated, routine washing, chopping and drying is all that is required to prepare vinyl for reuse. Currently, the industry is