

environment. Since the policy went into effect six months ago, I've heard very few complaints and Austin's consumers and businesses alike seem to be adjusting well."

The City of Austin announcement is posted at <http://www.austintexas.gov/news/texas-retailers-association-drops-bag-ordinance-lawsuit-0>.

Statistics & Trends

25 Percent Of Toys Tested In Sweden Exceed Hazardous Substance Limits

Earlier this month, the Swedish Chemicals Agency published a 28-page summary report on the testing of toys in 2012 and 2013 for compliance with environmental regulations such as the REACH Regulation and the RoHS Directive. Over the two-year period, KEMI tested 211 toys and found 53 contained excessive concentrations of prohibited substances.

The report says phthalates in soft plastics and lead in electric toys were the most commonly occurring substances exceeding permissible concentrations. The report concludes in part that *"some companies in the toy industry lack knowledge of the rules for toy safety, and there is a great need to increase their understanding. The same lack of knowledge applies to chemicals and harmful substances."*

The report also said continued regulatory surveillance is needed.

Download a copy of the KEMI report at <http://www.kemi.se/Documents/Publikationer/Trycksaker/Tillsyn/Tillsyn6-13-leksaker-2012-2013.pdf>.

Taiwanese Annual Green Procurement Level Reaches NT\$44.7 Billion

According to a Taiwan Environmental Protection Agency announcement today, green procurement by government, businesses and other organizations combined reached NT\$44.7 billion last week, a record high. Green products are those that have been awarded Taiwan's Green Mark label.

Businesses in particular purchased more green products in 2012 - 59 companies spent more than NT\$20 million each on procuring green products, compared to 45 companies in 2011 - a nearly 30 percent increase.

The Taiwan EPA announcement is posted at http://ivy5.epa.gov.tw/enews/fact_Newsdetail.asp?InputTime=1020925153645.

Washington State Program Collects 200,000th Mercury-Containing Automotive Switches

Yesterday, the Washington Department of Ecology announced that a state program begun in 2006 to collect mercury-containing switches from end-of-life vehicles reached a milestone last month: 200,000 waste switches have been collected. The Department of Ecology estimates the program has prevented 445 pounds of elemental mercury from entering the environment.

The program is a partnership among the Department of Ecology, the Automotive Recyclers of Washington Association and End-of-Life Vehicle Solutions, an industry organization. Funding for the program should be available through 2016, according to the Department of Ecology.

The Department of Ecology announcement is posted at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/news/2013/240.html>.

US Steel Recycling Effort Reaches One Billion Ton Mark

On Monday, the US Steel Recycling Institute (SRI) said that since 1988 the US steel industry has recycled more than one billion tons of its products.

SRI also released 2012 steel recycling data, showing 84 million tons of steel were recycled for an 88 percent recycling rate. Among the sources were 16.3 million tons of end-of-life vehicles and 2.7 million tons of old appliances. More than 1.3 million tons of tin plate steel used for making steel cans was also recycled.

The SRI announcement is posted at http://www.recycle-steel.org/en/sitecore/content/Recycle-Steel_org/Document%20Types/Press%20Releases/2012%20Steel%20Recycling%20Rates.aspx.

Norwegian Agency Publishes Handy Guide To Hazardous Substances In C&D Waste

Yesterday, the Norwegian Environment Agency published an illustrated four-page guide on hazardous substances commonly found in construction waste. The guide was prepared to assist construction and demolition project managers from disposing of wastes that could contaminate the environment. In Norway, waste management plans are required for new construction exceeding 300 square meters of floor space, renovation projects exceeding 100 square meters of floor space, and all construction and demolition projects generating 10 or more tons of waste.

A few of the materials highlighted in the guide are EPS insulation containing brominated flame retardants, rubber pipe insulation containing brominated flame retardants, mastics containing harmful metals, insulating glass containing PCBs and chlorinated paraffins, vinyl flooring containing phthalates and creosote-impregnated wood containing PAHs.

Download a copy of the guide at <http://www.miljodirektoratet.no/no/Publikasjoner/2013/September-2013/Farlig-avfall-fra-bygg-og-anlegg/>.

Video Game Consoles Have Become More Energy Efficient, Says US EPA

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said earlier this month that voluntary improvements made to video game console designs by the three leading manufacturers have resulted in "*dramatic improvements*" in energy efficiency. The voluntary improvements were encouraged under the EPA's ENERGY STAR program.

Specifically, the EPA said, "*Boxes from all three major manufacturers now feature power management capability as called for in EPA's voluntary standards, meaning they will go into a low-power sleep mode when not being used for game play or streaming videos.*"

"*Since EPA began engaging with manufacturers, consoles have seen a dip in energy consumption from 162W to 69W for the Xbox 360 and 181W to 58W for the PlayStation 3,*" the EPA said. "*If all game consoles sold in the United States met EPA's voluntary efficiency standard, the energy cost savings would grow to \$1.6 billion each year and 22 billion pounds of annual greenhouse gas emissions would be prevented, equivalent to the emissions from more than two million vehicles.*"

The US EPA announcement is posted at

<http://www.energystar.gov/ia/partners/publications/pubdocs/ENERGY%20STAR%20UPDATE%20-%20Game%20Consoles.pdf?c437-45d8>.

Business Initiatives

Plastics Recyclers Europe Offers Plan To Recycle Up To 62 Percent of EU Plastics

"*A plastics recycling target of 62% is achievable by 2020,*" according to the industry organization Plastics Recyclers Europe in a statement made earlier this month. The current overall EU plastics recycling rate is only 24 percent.

The statement follows release by Plastics Recyclers Europe last month of a 42-page report. To help achieve a 62 percent recycling rate, the report recommends diverting 24 million tons of plastic waste from landfill, putting 11 million tons of plastic recycle back in the market, and recovering energy from only 7.5 million tons of residual waste.

The report claims such a strategy would create 360,000 jobs, save EUR 4.5 billion in virgin plastic production costs, and reduce CO₂ emissions by 26 million tons.

Get more information at

http://www.plasticsrecyclers.eu/sites/default/files/Study%20on%20an%20increased%20mechanical%20recycling%20target%20for%20plastics_BIOIS.pdf.

UK Plastics Industry Association Slams Government Proposed Carrier Bag Charge

Last week, the United Kingdom's Plastic and Films Association (PAFA) reacted negatively to an announcement on September 14 by UK Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg that a five-pence

carrier bag charge will be in effect in English in autumn of 2015. (The draft regulation has yet to be prepared.)

"This announcement sends many mixed messages and ignores the reality of Environment Agency studies that show plastic carriers have lower overall impacts than any other material when properly re-used and recycled," said PAFA CEO Barry Turner. "The encouragement being shown to so-called biodegradable bags is also wholly unsupportable as such bags are made to deliberately go to waste and are not currently regulated by any quality standards. It also sends the message that littering biodegradable bags will be acceptable when the reality is that small particles from discarded degradable bags are more likely to be ingested by wildlife."

Instead of a bag charge, Turner called for increased emphasis on in-store plastic bag collection programs, which he said could help the UK meet upcoming EU plastic recycling targets.

Download the PAFA statement at <http://www.pafa.org.uk/media-centre-142/press-releases>.

The Green Perspective

US Study Finds Misinterpretation Of Food Labels Contributes Heavily To Food Waste Generation

Last week, a study released by the Natural Resources Defense Council and Harvard Law School's Food Law and Policy Clinic claimed, *"More than 90 percent of Americans may be prematurely tossing food because they misinterpret food labels as indicators of food safety."* The finding is important because food waste is the largest element in solid waste sent to landfill in the United States.

Consumer misinterpretation of food expiration dates is primarily to blame, according to the report. It costs the average US household \$275-455 per year, which contributes to the \$165 billion in food that is wasted annually.

The study also offers recommendations for improving the situation, including *"a more uniform, easily understandable date label system that communicates clearly with consumers by 1) using consistent, unambiguous language; 2) clearly differentiating between safety- and quality-based dates; 3) predictably locating the date on package; 4) employing more transparent methods for selecting dates; and other changes to improve coherency."*

Get more information at <http://www.nrdc.org/media/2013/130918.asp>.

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