



News Release

For Immediate Release

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PLASTIC BAG MANUFACTURERS COMMEND SPIRIT OF WAL-MART INITIATIVE

Program Will Strengthen Wal-Mart's Success in Recycling Plastic Bags and Wraps

ARLINGTON, VA (September 25, 2008) – Today the Progressive Bag Affiliates of the American Chemistry Council, a trade association representing the nation's leading plastic bag manufacturers, recyclers and resin producers, applauded Wal-Mart for its efforts to develop a responsible plastic bag policy. Under this plan, which promotes the more efficient use of plastic bags in Wal-Mart stores, the company will strengthen its existing efforts to recycle – an action that is expected bolster Wal-Mart's position as a world leader in the recycling of plastic bags and wraps.

“It is clear that strong, lightweight plastics are playing a key role in helping Wal-Mart to reach its sustainability goals. Everyday, lighter more efficient plastic products and packages mean a reduction in energy use, costs and emissions for the world's largest retailer,” said Shari Jackson, director of the Progressive Bag Affiliates.

“Wal-Mart clearly understands that plastic bags are a better environmental choice than alternatives but is taking steps to reduce waste and increase recycling. Bans are not the answer,” said Jackson. “In fact, Wal-Mart's steps toward implementing this goal are very consistent with our own efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle plastic bags. Plastic bags are too valuable to waste. They should be reused and recycled.”

For example:

1. Reduce – Plastic bags today weigh about one-tenth the amount of paper bags. In addition, to using less material, plastic bags produce less than half the greenhouse gas emissions (a lower carbon footprint), require 70 percent less energy to manufacture, and generate 80 percent less waste than paper alternatives. Proper bagging can help reduce waste even further, and PBA members have introduced programs to help grocers and retailers adopt efficient bagging practices focused on maximizing the number of items per bag.
2. Reuse – Plastic bags are arguably one of the most reused products in our society. Over 90 percent of families reuse plastic bags around their homes for a wide range of purposes, such as bringing lunches to work, lining garbage bins, disposing of diapers and picking up after pets. The high percentage of reuse enables shoppers to avoid the added environmental impacts associated with using a new bag. PBA works to educate shoppers about creative ways to reuse and recycle their plastic bags.

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3. Recycle – Plastic bags are fully recyclable. Nationwide 812 million pounds of plastic bags and film were recycled in 2006, up 24 percent from 2005. Wal-Mart reportedly recycles about 120 million pounds per year. These valuable materials are used to make durable backyard decking products and new plastic bags.

“The plastic bag industry is a leader in innovation and recycling, and we welcome opportunities to work with companies and policymakers to develop responsible plastic bag practices,” said Jackson. “We hope to work with Wal-Mart and other companies to increase the use of recycled content in plastic carryout bags.”

Importantly, the overwhelming trend nationally has been to implement plastic bag recycling programs. In 2007, California mandated in-store recycling programs, and similar measures passed this year in New York State, Rhode Island, Chicago, New York City and several New York counties. By contrast, San Francisco remains the only large jurisdiction in the United States to ban plastic bags.

About the Progressive Bag Affiliates

The Progressive Bag Affiliates of the American Chemistry Council promote the responsible use and recycling of plastic bags. The PBA recycling toolkit is being used by retailers around the nation as a reference for determining the best ways to deploy effective recycling solutions in stores. Consumers, businesses and recyclers can find a wealth of information on plastic bag recycling at www.plasticbagrecycling.org.

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