



## News Release

For Immediate Release

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### RECYCLING OF RIGID PLASTICS TOPS 930 MILLION POUNDS ANNUALLY

#### *HDPE, PET Containers Surpass Recycling Milestone with 60+ Percent Access*

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA (March 19, 2013) – The recycling of rigid plastics, excluding bottles, climbed 13 percent in 2011 to reach at least 934 million pounds for the year, and U.S. consumers with local access to recycle all non-bottle rigid plastics shot from 40 percent to 57 percent between 2011 and 2012, according to a pair of reports released today at the Plastics Recycling Conference.

Both reports were the result of extensive survey work conducted by [Moore Recycling Associates Inc.](#) on behalf of the [American Chemistry Council](#).

The “[2011 National Postconsumer Non-Bottle Rigid Plastic Recycling Report](#)” found that 61 percent of rigid plastics collected in the United States were recycled in the U.S. or Canada, a sharp increase from the slightly over one-third recycled in this region in 2007, when Moore Recycling began measuring rigid plastics collection.

This report also found that polypropylene and polyethylene plastics comprise the largest portion (70 percent) of postconsumer non-bottle rigid plastics collected in the United States with polypropylene constituting 39 percent of all rigid plastics recycling and high-density polyethylene constituting 31 percent.

Contributing to the recent surge in rigid plastics recycling has been a substantial increase in the number of communities that are now collecting many types of rigid plastics in addition to bottles. The new consumer access report, “[Plastic Recycling Collection: National Reach Study, 2012 Update](#)” found that more than 1,400 cities and 300 counties in the United States now collect all rigid plastic containers in addition to plastic bottles.

Another key finding of this report is that the portion of U.S. consumers with access to recycle two key categories of rigid containers – HDPE rigid cups, tubs and containers and PET trays, clamshells and cups – now tops 60 percent. This means that for the first time, under the Federal Trade Commission’s guidelines, recycling access is sufficiently widespread to label these containers “recyclable” without the need for additional qualification or disclaimer.

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“With recycling of rigid plastics containers now available to a substantial majority of Americans – in other words, surpassing the FTC’s 60 percent threshold – the recycling message can be greatly simplified, making it easier to educate consumers,” said Steve Russell, vice president of plastics for the American Chemistry Council.

“This is a significant milestone for recycling and a tremendous benefit to packaging manufacturers, major brands, consumers and recyclers,” Russell said.

For example, within the Sustainable Packaging Coalition’s How2Recycle label system, HDPE and PET containers have surpassed the “Limited Recycling/Check Locally” category and now meet criteria for the “Widely Recycled” category.

According to the report, rigid polypropylene containers are the next likely class of rigid plastics to approach FTC’s “recyclability” threshold with 58.4 percent of U.S. consumers currently able to recycle these items locally.

A third report released today explores major factors that are contributing to the rapid growth in rigid plastics recycling, such as increased demand, public commitments, excess MRF capacity, and improved consumer education. “[Growth Trends and New Drivers for Non-Bottle Mixed Rigid Plastics Recycling](#),” prepared by [Resource Recycling, Inc.](#) and sponsored by ACC’s Plastics Division, contains recommendations for communities that are considering adding rigid plastics to their recycling programs, four case studies, and examples of successful community education programs.

Communities currently vary widely in the types of rigid plastics collected for recycling. Most municipalities accept household containers, such as yogurt cups, dairy and deli containers, and lids. A growing number of communities is adding bulkier rigid plastics, such as toys, lawn furniture, laundry baskets, and other items.

The primary domestic end uses for recycled rigid plastics are pipe, buckets, automotive products and other relatively thick-walled injection products, such as drums and crates. Lidded reusable food storage containers and kitchen tools, such as cutting boards, measuring cups and serving utensils, are another growing market for this material.

Data on the recycling of plastic bottles, plastic film, and rigid plastics are captured in plastic recycling industry surveys and reported separately. The collection of plastics in all three categories has increased in recent years, with rigid plastics growing the fastest followed closely by film.

The recycling of plastic film grew four percent in 2011 to top 1 billion pounds for the first time (see [full “film report”](#)). The recycling of plastic bottles climbed 45 million pounds in 2011, edging up 1.7 percent, to reach over 2.6 billion pounds for the year (see [full “bottles report”](#)).

**View any of ACC’s recycling reports at:**

<http://plastics.americanchemistry.com/Education-Resources/Publications>



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**Access tools, news and info for recycling professionals at: [www.RecycleYourPlastics.com](http://www.RecycleYourPlastics.com), “like” us on Facebook (Recycle Your Plastics), or follow us on (Twitter @Recycle\_Plastic).**

### **About the Plastics Division**

The American Chemistry Council’s Plastics Division represents leading companies dedicated to providing innovative solutions to the challenges of today and tomorrow through plastics. Ongoing innovations from **America’s Plastics Makers**<sup>TM</sup> have led to medical advances and safety equipment that make our lives better, healthier and safer every day. And, advances in plastics are helping Americans save energy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and decrease waste. Because plastics are such a valuable resource, the Plastics Division is leading efforts to “reduce, reuse, recycle and recover,” including through outreach, education and access to advances in recycling technology.

[www.americanchemistry.com/plastics](http://www.americanchemistry.com/plastics)

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*The American Chemistry Council (ACC) represents the leading companies engaged in the business of chemistry. ACC members apply the science of chemistry to make innovative products and services that make people's lives better, healthier and safer. ACC is committed to improved environmental, health and safety performance through Responsible Care<sup>®</sup>, common sense advocacy designed to address major public policy issues, and health and environmental research and product testing. The business of chemistry is a \$760 billion enterprise and a key element of the nation's economy. It is the largest exporting sector in the U.S., accounting for 12 percent of U.S. exports. Chemistry companies are among the largest investors in research and development. Safety and security have always been primary concerns of ACC members, and they have intensified their efforts, working closely with government agencies to improve security and to defend against any threat to the nation's critical infrastructure.*

