



# AB 2449 Compliance Survey

By

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# The Plastic Bag Problem

- It is estimated that California retailers distribute more than 19 million plastic carryout bags annually
- Fewer than five percent are recycled per the Plastic Bag Alliance
- AB 2449 passed to increase recycling opportunities



# AB 2449 Requirements

Effective July 1, 2007

- Covered retailers required to place a clearly marked bin for plastic carryout bags at each store
- Provide plastic carryout bags printed with "PLEASE RETURN TO A PARTICIPATING STORE FOR RECYCLING"
- Provide reusable bags for sale
- Collect, transport and recycle all plastic carryout bags.
- Weight reporting to CIWMB.

The law provides penalties for retailers who do not comply as well as oversight responsibilities to local authorities.

# You're who? And from where?



- City of Sunnyvale surveyed a total of 20 supermarkets, pharmacies and small independent markets
- Survey completed over two month period between February and March 2008

# Survey results



- 85% compliance: 11 of 13 covered retailers compliant on first visit
- One voluntary recycling participant
- Two of seven small, non-covered independent stores surveyed discussing internally to provide reusable bags due to:
  - Concerns of high cost of oil driving probable future plastic bag cost increases
  - Advertising opportunity to place store name on a reusable bag
  - Doing the right thing

# Current store practices

- Large variation in reusable bag materials and displays
  - AB 2449 requires minimum of 2.5 mil plastic reusable bags for sale
  - One store ONLY offered 2.5 mil plastic bags
  - Polypropylene most commonly used, canvas frequently available
  - Price ranges \$.99 - \$5.00
  - Prominent, easy to find in some stores vs dark, out-of-the-way placement in others
- Incentives to purchase/use reusable bags
  - Range of \$.01 - \$.05 credit for each customer-provided bag by some stores
  - Weekly drawing for \$25 gift card at one store
  - In-store exhortations to do the right thing posted to chalkboards, environmentally friendly catch phrases on reusable bags, etc.



# Current store practices continued

- Dedicated plastic carryout bag recycle bins
  - Most covered retailers provide two bins, one at each entrance
  - Majority of covered retailers use typical recycling signage, easily identifiable. No California Grocers Ass'n toolkit-supplied graphics noted in any store.
  - One chain retailer obligated per corporate office to place sole (red) recycle bin on back wall of customer service area 180° juxtaposed from entrance
  - Only one non-covered retailer of seven surveyed provided a recycling bin
- Collection, transport and weight record requirements
  - Majority of store managers aware of recycling requirements/interpreted as providing plastic bag recycling bins
  - Majority of store managers unaware of weight record requirement
  - Most stores bale ALL plastic film and send to central warehouses to record weights



# Challenges for smaller, independent retailers

- Lack of customer recycling awareness coupled with language barriers
- Requests for Spanish language outreach materials (currently not available)
- Customers in lower income areas request multiple plastic bags for later home re-use
- Customer perception of “Why buy a reusable bag when free ones are available?”

# Information gap between corporate and local levels

- Paper or plastic?  
Bagging practices vary
- Store employee plastic bag recycling awareness slight
- Corporate mandates vs local control



# Conclusions and Recommendations

- Reusable bag use slowly increasing
- Local retailers complain of contamination to plastic bag recycle bins
- Better bagging practices and employee training/awareness would help reduce plastic bag use at the source--no evidence this is happening
- Conduct multilingual outreach
- Spanish language retailers toolkit under development (Progressive Bag Affiliates, arm of American Chemistry Council)