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APR Develops Sorting Protocols for Recycling Industry

Identifying Packages That Get Lost in the Recycling Process

The initial phase of the first ever industry effort designed to provide packaging manufacturers the ability to assess the sortability of their products in the waste stream will be unveiled at the The Association of Plastic Recyclers' (APR) Member Meeting next week (June 5-7) in Houston.

APR, the leading international trade organization representing the plastics recycling industry, initiated the Sortation Potential Protocols to address the issue of how packages and containers of all material types flow through a typical MRF.

"We continually get questions about whether or not a certain type of package is recyclable," commented Steve Alexander, President and CEO of APR. "An integral step in determining recyclability is assessing whether or not the article can be sorted properly. If it can not be successfully sorted, it won't make it to the recyclers, and will most likely end up in the landfill."

APR's definition of recyclable is based on 3 factors: access to recycling programs, successful sortation, and the ability to be processed into a new material. Although these protocols assess the sorting potential of a package, additional components or features must be tested before they are considered recyclable.

Some packaging characteristics that may affect successful sortation through those steps include size, color, labels, and metals. Another important topic that must be addressed is 2D and 3D packaging. The fourth test will assess how packaging that is flat or thin will flow through a typical MRF.

"A typical MRF includes size screens, NIR sortation, and magnets," explained Alexander. "These tests address each of those steps in the sortation process. We are currently developing another protocol to assess how compressed plastic items flow through a MRF. We hope to announce that test in October."

The development of the Sorting Potential Protocols is part of an ongoing effort to ensure *The APR Design® Guide for Plastics Recyclability* remains the most comprehensive resource outlining the plastics recycling industry's recommendations in the marketplace today. Beyond *The APR Design® Guide*, APR offers a wide variety of resources including test methods, glossaries, references for color and labels, flow charts, and other supporting documents.

"Recycling is a complicated industry," commented Scott Saunders, Board Chair of APR and General Manager of KW Plastics Recycling. "Unfortunately design innovations often affect recyclability, but more specifically, the ability for that package to be properly sorted at the MRF. These new protocols allow designers to make that determination early in the process, and more importantly, these protocols are material neutral. Because the sortation potential of any type of material can be assessed, the entire sortation and recycling industry can benefit from their utilization."

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The Association of Plastic Recyclers (APR) is *The Voice of Plastics Recycling*®. As the international trade association representing the plastics recycling industry, membership includes independent recycling companies of all sizes, processing numerous resins, as well as consumer product companies, equipment manufacturers, testing laboratories, organizations, and others committed to the success of plastics recycling. APR advocates the recycling of all plastics. Visit www.PlasticsRecycling.org for more information.