

A View of BPI's World

Message from the President

This is the Fall issue of BPI's newsletter. It is designed to update members and other interested groups and individuals about the latest developments in the area of biodegradable and compostable plastics.



I am glad to say that interest in the BPI continues to grow along with the Compostable Logo effort. More importantly, our efforts to educate key audiences are meeting with success. Witness the recent legislation in California. It requires that manufacturers meet ASTM Specifications, when making “biodegradable” and “compostable” claims. This is an important step to assure that products sold in California will perform as claimed and will help our industry grow in a scientifically valid way. More details can be found below.

In order to handle the growing interest in the BPI and its programs, the Board of Directors has asked Steve Mojo to become a full time Executive Director. Now he will be able to devote all of his energy and knowledge to helping us grow. As part of our agreement, Steve will no longer consult for any BPI members or clients with interests in the plastics industry.

Please feel free to share the “View” and if you have questions, contact the BPI office “888-BPI-LOGO” or via the website: www.bpiworld.org.

Sincerely,

Tony Gioffre-BPI President

The View of California:

On September 23, 2004, the Governor Schwarzenegger signed SB 1749 into law. This legislation is intended to help minimize the confusing and misleading use of certain environmental terms used by plastic bag manufacturers and distributors. Since the legislation was signed into law, a number of questions have arisen as to what the new law means and how it will impact the plastics industry. Here is what you need to know about the new law.

It states, that after January 1, 2005,

“A person shall not sell a plastic bag in this state that is labeled with the term “compostable,” “biodegradable,” “degradable,” or any form of those terms, or in anyway imply that the bag will break down in a landfill, composting, marine, or other natural terrestrial environment, unless, at the time of the sale, the plastic bag meets a current ASTM standard specification for the term used on the label.”
(Section 42357 Part a)

The Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) together with CFECA and the California Bag and Film Alliance and the environmental group Californians Against Waste supported this legislation because it uses scientifically based criteria as the basis for making these claims. This is the original intent of the guidelines published by the Federal Trade Commission, in its “Guides for the Use of Environmental Marketing Claims”. Also, the new law is designed to provide a level playing field for all manufacturers making these claims.

What ASTM Standards will fulfill this legal requirement?

In order to meet the requirements of this legislation, plastic bags making any “biodegradable” or “compostable” claims must meet current ASTM specifications that are in place today. ASTM D6400 Standard Specification for Compostable Plastics is the only ASTM Specification that supports these claims at this time. The new legislation is very clear in that it limits the requirements only to specifications and excludes the use of other ASTM documents.

What else does the bill say?

Also the new law enables the public to ask for verification of claims from manufacturers.

“A manufacturer or supplier, upon the request of a member of the public, shall submit to that member, within 90 days of the request, information and documentation demonstrating compliance with this chapter, in a format that is easy to understand and scientifically accurate. (Section 42357 Part b)”

The Compostable Logo is an easy way for consumers to tell if the product meets the ASTM Specification. Further, the BPI will work with suppliers of approved products to provide the information required to demonstrate that their products meet the legislation.

Other observations of California

At the end of September, Gov. Schwarzenegger signed SB 2146 into law, commonly known as the “Large Venue Recycling Bill”.

“This bill would require the board, by April 1, 2005, to make available one or more model local agency ordinances to facilitate solid waste reduction, reuse, and recycling programs at large venue and large events, consult with specified entities while developing the model ordinances, and post specified information on the board's Internet Web site.”

“The bill would require each local agency, which the bill would define as a city or a county, to provide specified information, on and after July 1, 2005, to operators of large venues and large events when issuing a permit and, by August 1, 2006, and annually thereafter, until August 1, 2008, to provide the board with an estimate and description of the top 10% of large venues and large events within its jurisdiction, based upon amount of solid waste generated, as submitted by operators at large venues and large events.”

This bill calls attention to the wastes that are being generated by large events and covers large private, nonprofit, or publicly owned stadiums, sports arenas, theaters, halls, amusement parks, zoos, airports, fairgrounds, museums, and other large venue businesses.

It will create opportunities for BPI approved products as venue operators search for ways to divert, recycle and compost more of their wastes.

📍 **A View of Overseas Activities:**

Japan & China

In October, the Biodegradable Plastics Society of Japan (BPS) and the Biodegradable Materials Group of China (BMG) signed a memorandum of understanding to cooperate in the area of standards and laboratories. This is the first step in the development of specifications that are similar to those in the Europe and the US, along with increasing the number of approved testing labs. These developments will help to reduce the confusing claims that continue to exist in the market. Harmonization with Asia has been an ongoing goal for the BPI and DIN Certco. We offer our congratulations to the members of the BPS and BMG on their achievements.

Taiwan-In early September, a delegation from Taiwan visited with city officials in San Francisco, CA and witnessed the city's source separated food scrap collection program in action. The delegation was sponsored by the Grains Council and included high ranking officials from Taiwan's EPA and the Environmentally Biodegradable Polymers Association (EBPA). The Taiwanese were impressed by the entire program in San Francisco and the dedication of Jack Macy (SF Environment) and Bob Besso (Norcal) to making the program a success. The delegation then traveled to meet with DIN Certco and learn more about the biodegradable project in Kassel, Germany.

Also the delegation met with Dr. Narayan and Steve Mojo to discuss the current situation in North America. Also, information was shared regarding development of new ASTM specification. Dr. Narayan invited the Taiwanese to participate in ASTM D20.96 and provided them with copies of D6400 and D6868 for translation and use. These efforts will continue to help harmonize the direction of Asia with that of Europe and North America.

📍 **A View of Membership and Approved Products**

Let's all welcome the following people and organizations to the BPI. You can find contact information in the Member's Directory on the BPI website.

- -David Zutler, Biota Springwater with the first compostable bottle for premium water.
- -Elie Helou, Jr. Biosphere Industries, developing compostable alternatives to foamed packaging.
- -William Kelly , DaniMer LLC, developing compostable and biodegradable mulch films
- -Ian Boucard, Spike Brands, a distributor of biodegradable "pooper bags", using BPI approved materials

📍 **Upcoming Meetings:**

Below is a list of meetings and conferences that traditionally have been of interest to BPI members. If you wish to add others, please forward the dates to the BPI office, via the website.

Dates	Name	Location	Contact Info.
2004			
Nov 7-10	ASTM D20-Plastics	Washington, DC	www.astm.org
Dec 5-10	BEPS Conference	Monterrey, Mexico	www.beps.org
2005			
Jan. 23-26	US Composting Council	San Antonio, TX	www.compostingcouncil.org
March 7-9	BioCycle West	San Francisco, CA	www.jgpress.com