



California Environmental Protection Agency

NEWS RELEASE

Integrated Waste Management Board

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California reaches environmental milestone

State announces 50% waste diversion goal met

SACRAMENTO—Thank you San Diego, you've done it!

After more than a decade of building an efficient infrastructure, enduring early years of doubt and nay-saying and seeing a seismic shift in public opinion, California now diverts 52 percent of the 76 million tons of solid municipal wastes its residents generate every year. The official 52 percent statewide diversion rate meets a legislatively imposed mandate and places the state at the forefront of national efforts to reduce and recycle our trash.

Meeting at the Miramar Landfill Greenery recycling facility in San Diego today, the California Integrated Waste Management Board announced that the goal first set forth in the Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 has been officially reached, reversing a time when state residents and workplaces routinely sent 90 percent of their garbage to be buried in landfills.

"I am proud of how California has once again shown the nation what can be done through perseverance and ingenuity," said Board Chair Margo Reid Brown. "Achieving this goal has required a long-term commitment from all sectors of the private and public enterprises. I deeply appreciate what has been accomplished."

Calculated through a series of comprehensive standards used by the California Integrated Waste Management Board, the new rate reflects the impact of population and economic growth during the year. The Board reviews waste generation and disposal tonnages and annual reports submitted to the State by hundreds of cities, counties and regional waste management compacts. In addition, waste tonnages are calculated based on landfill disposal fees collected by the State Board of Equalization and paid to the Waste Board. The Waste Board receives approximately \$1.40 for every ton of waste disposed in California landfills.

The 1989 Act required individual cities and counties to cut their disposal rates in half, but left the mechanics for doing so largely up to each jurisdiction in light of their individual needs and available resources. Since the adoption of the Act the Board has provided oversight, as well as technical guidance and financial assistance for programs leading to increased waste diversion.

The city of San Diego diverted 52 percent of its waste in 2004. City recycling services include residential curbside recycling and greenwaste pickup, a zone recycling collection program for those without curbside recycling service, business waste assessment and recognition programs, and educational outreach. The Miramar Landfill Greenery recycling facility makes compost, mulch and wood chips from the approximately 100,000 tons of green waste and food waste brought there annually. The landfill also serves as the hub for city waste management programs that include a full-service public recycling center that accepts appliances and electronic waste among many other items, a household hazardous waste transfer facility, as well as room for a planned construction and demolition materials recovery facility.

“I offer my congratulations to everyone in San Diego for exceeding state’s 50 percent waste reduction goal by recycling at home and at work,” said Mayor Jerry Sanders. “With the Miramar Landfill rapidly soon reaching its capacity, we need to work even harder to recycle and divert trash.”

The landmark Act of 1989 charged the Board with implementing far-reaching provisions and moving cities and counties—and ultimately the state, itself—to higher waste diversion levels. In 1990, California diverted just 10 percent of its waste stream, causing broad concern about the dwindling landfill capacity available to meet disposal requirements.

Today, California sees the importance of recycling much more clearly. Nearly 500 cities, counties and regional waste management agencies around the state contribute to a multi-million dollar infrastructure of waste handling options for residents and businesses alike.

Curbside waste pickup services, recycling bins, waste sorting facilities, green waste composting, used oil collection centers, hundreds of permitted and active landfills, household hazardous waste amnesty days or centers, recycled content procurement practices, broadcast and written public education campaigns, electronic waste stewardship, waste tire tracking manifests, “green” buildings, public recognition awards and myriad other programs abound, routing tons of salvageable materials to innovative markets that didn’t exist just a few years ago.

The outcome is a statewide municipal waste diversion record, a blossoming recycling-oriented economy and the creation and expansion of robust markets for recyclable materials that leads the nation by example. In California, waste recycling and management ranks on an economic and job creation scale comparable to the state’s vaunted entertainment industry.

By reducing the trash thrown away by recycling it or reusing it, California has created a mainstream industry of statewide importance comprised of 5,300 business operations employing more than 85,000 workers and generating \$4 billion in salaries and wages along with \$10 billion worth of goods and services annually.

The environmental impacts of recycling are also astounding. Each year recycling saves enough energy to power 1.4 million California homes and reduces water pollutants by 27,047 tons. Furthermore, recycling saves 14 million trees each year and helps to reduce air pollutants by 165,142 tons. All of these efforts are working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an amount equal to removing 3.8 million passenger cars off California roads and highways.

The California Integrated Waste Management Board is the State's leading authority on recycling and waste reduction. It promotes a zero waste California in partnership with local government, industry, and the public. This means reducing waste whenever possible, promoting the management of all materials to their highest and best use, and protecting public health and safety and the environment.

The California Integrated Waste Management Board is one of six boards, departments, and offices within the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA).

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