



# RECYCLING ADVOCATES

February 2005

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*Involving people in creating a sustainable future through local efforts to reduce, reuse, and recycle*

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## Water On The Go: Reflections on the Bottle

By Lori Stole

In the not-so-distant-past the single serve water bottle did not exist. Can you imagine? How did we manage to travel around through our day without one? In just a few short years these bottles have taken over. They've taken over supermarket shelves, meetings, events, and our desktops and garbage cans.

### Reduce

Following the waste management hierarchy, our best strategy for this new waste stream is to reduce its use. After all, we did manage without bottled water for a very long time. Think back, and consider the ways.

- Carry a mug with you and fill it from a tap when you get to your event.
- Buy a durable water bottle to carry around with you. (Wash it regularly.)
- Invest in a cooler for the meeting room if there is not a water tap there.

*Before choosing to buy that bottle of water consider the following*

The Container Recycling Institute (CRI) estimated several years ago that manufacturing a 1 year supply of America's water bottles consumes more than 1.5 million barrels of oil, and bottled water sales are growing wildly every year. Is their use necessary?

*Continued on page 2, column 1*

## Recycling Mercury-Containing Lamps

*New CD-ROM available*

The Association of Lighting and Mercury Recyclers (ALMR), along with the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) and the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA), recently released an educational CD-ROM promoting the recycling of mercury-containing lamps. The CD is a product of the Lamp Recycling Outreach Project (LROP), a cooperative agreement between the ALMR and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and funded by the EPA.

"The national recycling rate is very low, just about 24 percent," according to Paul Abernathy, executive director of the ALMR and director of the project. "We believe the low recycling rate is because most people are not aware many lamps contain toxic levels of mercury or that they have a responsibility to keep this mercury out of the environment."

The CD-ROM contains:

- A short video overview of the mercury lighting and recycling issues;
- Specific information targeted at many groups that handle mercury lamps, including business owners, state governments, electrical distributors, environmental organizations, and solid waste professionals;
- Contact information for each state's primary regulatory agency;
- State-by-state recycling resources, guidance, etc.;
- A state-by-state comparison of stringency policies and federal regulations; and
- A comprehensive list of recyclers and recycling resources.

*Continued on page 3, column 1*

## News In Brief

### Office Depot Launches Free Collection Program

Partnering with the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation (RBRC), Office Depot is now collecting used cell phones and rechargeable batteries at all 960 Office Depot locations in the U.S. and Canada.

Office Depot will collect, at no charge, all old cell phones and all used rechargeable batteries weighing less than two pounds. These batteries are found in cell phones and also commonly found in other portable electronics products including cordless phones, laptop computers, personal digital assistants and digital cameras. While rechargeable batteries reduce waste by being reused again and again - replacing between 50 to 300 single-use disposal batteries - they contain potentially harmful substances and should be recycled rather than placed in the garbage.

The collected cell phones will be refurbished and resold when possible, or recycled. A portion of the proceeds received from the resale will benefit selected charities, such as Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

All rechargeable batteries collected in partnership with RBRC are recycled in a state-of-the-art metals reclamation facility in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania, with no by-products being sent to a landfill. Nickel and iron recovered from batteries are used in the production of stainless steel; cadmium is purified and used in Ni-Cd rechargeable batteries.

### E-Waste Help for Federal Agencies

The Environmental Protection Agency awarded its initial eight contracts in December to help federal agencies dispose of computers and other used

*Continued on page 2, column 3*

### **Water bottles, continued**

Ground water supplies in the vicinity of water bottlers are being depleted. Most scientists consider groundwater to be a non-renewable resource, due to the long amount of time needed to naturally replenish aquifers,

Some people purchase bottled water assuming that it is safer than tap water. However, in most cases tap water adheres to stricter purity standards than bottled water. The Sept/Oct 2003 issue of *E Environmental Magazine* covers many aspects of this issue.

#### **Recycle**

The second best strategy is to recycle that bottle. Single-use water bottles are manufactured from polyethylene terephthalate (PET), or #1 plastic resin. This material can be readily recycled and is used as raw material to make products like sweaters, carpet, tee shirts, and products for the home, but it cannot be circularly recycled back into water bottles.

The recycling rate for water bottles is low and decreasing steadily. A 2003 study from California found just 16% of its water bottles were recycled, while nearly 3 million were going into California's trash EVERY day. The demand for to-be-recycled PET bottles is larger than the supply. It's essential that these bottles find their way into the recycling stream. Collection would increase if these bottles were included in bottle deposit bills.

#### **By all means, avoid disposal**

The Container Recycling Institute reported recently that 90 % of plastic

water bottles end up as either garbage or litter. When disposed, they swallow landfill space or are incinerated, resulting in more air pollution and greenhouse gasses, and wasting valuable resources. Please, please help these bottles to get into the recycling stream!

#### **An alternative: Durable bottles**

When you do purchase that durable water bottle, there's an additional factor to be aware of. They are not all made from the same kind of material. Look at the bottom of the bottle for letters or a number that identify the plastic resin type. Polypropylene (PP) #5, polyethylene (PE), high density polyethylene (HDPE) #2 or low density polyethylene (LDPE) #4 have no recognized toxicity issues at this time and are considered acceptable materials. Bottles from these materials can all be recycled.

Polycarbonate (PC), a more rigid, clear material, is also commonly used, but some studies give cause for concern. These bottles are identified on the bottom with PC. A #7 bottle may also be PC, or any variety of other resin types. Bisphenol A (BPA) is the primary building block of polycarbonate, and is a known endocrine disrupter that mimics the female hormone estrogen. Scientists are just starting to learn that endocrine disrupters can cause problems at extremely low levels, and that sometimes these problems don't surface for a generation or two. It is commonly agreed that low levels of BPA migrate out of the plastic and into the food contained therein. There is disagreement however on whether the leaching is a health risk, leaving us to draw our own conclusion. Some of the arguments to consider and key references are summarized at this web site: [http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/projects/cases/baffled/baffled\\_notes.html](http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/projects/cases/baffled/baffled_notes.html). The Nalgene Company manufactures many of the durable water bottles commonly used. It is sometimes implied that all Nalgene bottles are made from PC, but only the tinted colored ones are in fact polycarbonate.. The blue-lidded, more opaque bottles are PE. No matter what bottle you consider buying, check those numbers on the bottom to know what plastic it is made from.

### **What you can do**

By reviewing your personal practices and advocating for change, you can help reduce the waste and environmental impacts of the current trends in PET-bottle use and disposal.

- Find alternatives to disposable water bottles.
- If you must use one, recycle it, and help educate others to do the same.
- If you frequent spaces that don't have recycling bins, ask for one.
- Support bottle bill expansion to include PET water bottles.

*Note: In the coming months, Recycling Advocates will keep you informed of any changes to Oregon's Bottle Bill that may impact disposable bottles. For more information on PET-bottle waste and recycling, visit [www.Container-Recycling.org](http://www.Container-Recycling.org).*

### **In Brief, continued**

electronic equipment in an environmental manner.

The Government Wide Acquisition Contracts for Recycling Electronics and Asset Disposition Services will help federal agencies recycle and dispose of electronic equipment.

According to the article, the EPA estimates federal agencies will spend about \$60 billion on information technology equipment, software, infrastructure and services in 2005. Furthermore, the government disposes of about 10,000 computers a week.

### **Glass Recycling: Prices and Quality Drop**

*American Recycler Newspaper* reported last month that the prices and quality of recovered glass continues to decline. The problem, according to Curt Brucey of Strategic Materials, Inc in Houston is not a weak market. Demand is strong, but the quality of collected glass is low due to single stream recycling and other waste management practices that increase diversion from landfills at the cost of contaminating recovered glass. For more information on the topic of glass recycling, visit [www.Container-Recycling.org](http://www.Container-Recycling.org)

## **RECYCLING ADVOCATES**

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**Mercury, continued**

For information about obtaining copies of the CD-ROM go to [www.lamprecycle.org](http://www.lamprecycle.org). Recycling Advocates members may borrow RA's copy free of charge by calling (503) 777-0909 or by sending a request to [info@recyclingadvocates.org](mailto:info@recyclingadvocates.org). Additional information about lamp recycling can be found at [www.almr.org](http://www.almr.org), or at the EPA's information page, [www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/id/univwast/lamp.htm](http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/id/univwast/lamp.htm).

For information on handling mercury-containing lamps in Oregon, visit [www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/hw/factsheets/WasteLampsBallasts.pdf](http://www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/hw/factsheets/WasteLampsBallasts.pdf).

**Get Active, Get Action Alerts!**

*RA member benefit helps keep you in the know*

Oregon's legislative session is upon us. You can support important recycling and waste prevention related bills by signing up for our "Action Alert" list. Recycling Advocates members who participate receive e-mail messages about when important hearings or other actions are to take place. Included may be talking points for letters and calls to your local representatives.

"Action Alert!" messages also help us prevent anti-recycling and anti-waste prevention bills from passing. During the last session the sudden (and sneaky) "Glass to Trash" bill came up unexpectedly. Recycling Advocates members received Action Alerts, and a flurry of calls from concerned citizens led to the demise of this harmful bill.

This year, we anticipate the need for member support for potential electronics stewardship legislation. As citizens, we can state our beliefs to our representatives and counter industry lobbyists with the voice of real Oregonians.

To become a member of our "Action Alert!" list, send your request to be included to [info@recyclingadvocates.org](mailto:info@recyclingadvocates.org).

**Get Even More Active, Go Lobby with RA members!**

*OCN Lobby Day on February 28*

Join other RA members to lobby in Salem for recycling and waste preven-

tion at Oregon Conservation Network's Environmental Lobby Day on Monday, February 28th. Environmental Lobby Day is all about learning, training and putting it all into action. Not only will the participants who are Oregon citizens learn the tools to become citizen lobbyists; they will put their training to immediate use by meeting with their legislators that afternoon to discuss critical environmental issues. This is an excellent opportunity for your staff and members to learn techniques for being active participants in Oregon's legislature.

The Board of Recycling Advocates would like to recruit **at least ten RA members** to travel to Salem for the event. Lobby Day will start at 9:00 a.m. on February 28 at the United Methodist Church in Salem (600 State Street NE) and will end around 4:30.

Parking is available, but contact OCN for details. OCN will also provide box lunches for \$6.00 per person. Participants must pre-order the meal.

To register, download the OCN Lobby Day form from the RA web site at [www.recyclingadvocates.org](http://www.recyclingadvocates.org), or contact Gretchen Fogelstrom of OCN at (503) 224-3924 or by e-mail at [gretchen@olcv.org](mailto:gretchen@olcv.org).

**Question of the Month**

E-waste keeps piling up, as states and the country have yet to implement sound policies for how to prevent electronics waste.

*What are you doing to recycle computers, cell phones, PDA's and other electronics? How many computers do you have in your home or office that need to be recycled?*

E-mail your responses to [info@recyclingadvocates.org](mailto:info@recyclingadvocates.org) or call us at (503) 777-0909 and leave a message by February 20.

*Answer to last month's question*

According to recent research, which of the following do small electronic devices like cell phones, PDA's, and keyboard mice leach out at levels considered as hazardous waste?

- A. Cadmium      B. Copper      C. Iodine      D. Lead

A recent University of Florida environmental engineers concludes that lead leaches from small electronic devices like cell phones, PDA's, and keyboard mice at levels considered as hazardous waste under EPA regulations. For more information, go to [www.svtc.org/cleancc/ewastehazwaste.htm](http://www.svtc.org/cleancc/ewastehazwaste.htm).



**RECYCLING ADVOCATES**  
**Membership Application**

- \$25 Advocate     \$50 Friend     \$100 Sustainer     \$10-24 Living Lightly
- I'm giving a gift membership to the recipient below.\**
- Sign me up for Action Alerts*     *Contact me about volunteering for RA*

Please enclose a check and mail to: PO Box 6736, Portland, OR 97228-6736

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Day \_\_\_\_\_ Evening \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  Send my newsletter by e-mail

\*Your name, if this is a gift membership: \_\_\_\_\_

*Your membership contribution to RA is tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.*

**Chocoate and roses, so passé. Give an RA membership today!**

**Recycling at Events: A Guide to Reducing Waste at Any Event**

*New edition available soon*

Recycling Advocates, Metro, and Portland's Office of Sustainable Development have collaborated to revise, print, and distribute a new edition of Recycling at Events. The fully updated guide covers the key areas of pre-event planning, day-of-event tips, and post-event evaluation. Specific topics include establishing goals, dealing with food, vendors, and volunteers, site logistics, set-up, publicity, and, of course, recycling. The Guide contains an updated and expanded list of resources for event planners. And, waste prevention and sustainability tips in each section give event planners the tools to "take it one step further."

The publication is free to all RA members and is available at no cost to individuals and organizations within the Metro area. Recycling Advocates will

sell and ship copies of the guide to anyone outside the Metro boundaries.

For more information, call Recycling Advocates at (503) 777-0909.

**Upcoming Events and Workshops**

***Illahee's 2005 Lecture Series***

*How Cities Learn: Portland's Place on Earth*

Stewart Brand presents "The Future of Cities as if the Past Mattered"

Date: February 16, 2005.

All lectures begin at 7:30 pm at First Congregational Church, 1126 SW Park in Portland. Visit [www.illahee.org](http://www.illahee.org) or call (503) 222-2719 for more information and to order tickets.

***Recycling Advocates Board Meeting***

Date: February 28, 2005.

Time: 7:30 p.m.

For location and information, call (503) 777-0909.

***Oregon Conservation Network***

*OCN Lobby Day*

Date: February 28, 2005.

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Location: Salem, the United Methodist Church at 600 State Street NE.

To register, download the OCN Lobby Day form from the RA web site at [www.recyclingadvocates.org](http://www.recyclingadvocates.org), or contact Gretchen Fogelstrom of OCN at (503) 224-3924 or by e-mail at [gretchen@olcv.org](mailto:gretchen@olcv.org).

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