



**PET Recycling in
District of Columbia Schools**

Sponsored by

District of Columbia Office of Recycling

In cooperation with

**Mid-Atlantic Consortium of Recycling and Economic
Development Officials (MACREDO)**

With funding support from

**National Association for PET Container Resources
(NAPCOR)**

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region III

District of Columbia Office of Recycling

The Department of Public Works is responsible for meeting the mandates established in D.C. Law 7-226 the "D.C. Solid Waste Management and Multi-Material Recycling Act of 1988." This law, which became effective March 16, 1989, represents the blueprint for developing a comprehensive program of recycling throughout the District. Recycling is an integral component of the District's solid waste management system.

The law establishes ambitious solid waste reduction goals for the recycling program and requires owners and occupants of residential and commercial properties to separate certain recyclable material from their waste stream. It also contains provisions for the District government to adopt procurement practices and policies to increase the use of recycled paper and paper products.

The Department of Public Works is committed to recycling and is undertaking increased efforts such as the PET pilot in D.C. Public Schools to bring about and sustain meaningful levels of recycling. The Department intends to meet the mandates established in D.C. Law 7-226 and continues to explore opportunities for expansion and improvement of the recycling program.

D.C. Public Schools in July 2000 signed up with the citywide recycling and trash contract providing for city collection services up to the back door. However, this contract presents the challenge of how to move the recycling from inside the schools to the outside where the citywide contract is in effect. The D.C. Office of Recycling and Urban Services, Inc., along with the help of each school, has been meeting this challenge by providing outdoor recycling containers to schools that are interested in recycling. The Department of Public Works, Solid Waste Education and Enforcement Program has been providing education through its school program SWEEP, JR (Students Working On Environmental And Educational Partnerships).

SWEEP, JR provides an array of approaches to educate and provide concrete steps children can take to positively affect their environment. These include interactive presentations, field trips, consultations and/or distribution of recycling and education materials, contest and annual awards ceremony and booths at community events, special events, and health fairs.

Recycling Benefits to the District

The District of Columbia established recycling as part of its solid waste management plan because recycling:

- *decreases* the amount of materials being disposed in landfills and incinerators,
- *saves* energy and natural resources,
- *results* in cleaner neighborhoods by reducing litter,
- *requires* collection, processing, and end-use businesses that lead to job creation and economic development.

PET School Recycling Pilot Project

The D.C. Office of Recycling is sponsoring the PET School Recycling Pilot Project to determine the best method for recycling PET beverage containers in District schools. Participating schools are provided with recycling bins, promotional flyers, and the opportunity for an assembly presentation as outreach for the project. The DC Office of Recycling is documenting the amount of recovered PET as a means to evaluate the pilot project success and to determine the best method for District-wide PET recycling.

PET Facts

Each year, more and more products are being packaged in PET (polyethylene terephthalate) identified with the #1 code on or near the bottom of the bottle or container. Soft drinks, water, and juice are commonly purchased in PET bottles and other products -- including peanut butter, salad dressing and oil, cosmetics, and household cleaners -- are packaged in PET containers.

The packaging industry uses PET for both food and non-food products because the material is low cost, light in weight, shatter-resistant, and can be recycled.

The number of PET bottles recovered from municipal recycling programs increased from 745 million pounds in 1998 to 771 million pounds in 1999. Almost 24 percent of the PET bottles available for recycling in the US in 1999 were recycled.

Recycled PET is used in making a variety of products including fabric and fiber for T-shirts and sweaters, polyester carpet, fiberfill for sleeping bags and winter coats, and new PET bottles.

Some interesting facts from NAPCOR:

- Each US consumer used about 12.5 pounds of PET bottles in 1999.
- Ten individual-size (20-oz) PET beverage bottles supply enough fiber for an extra large T-shirt.
- Fifty PET bottles are required for one sweater.
- Ten PET bottles are needed to produce enough fiberfill for a ski jacket.
- Seventy PET bottles yield enough fiberfill for a sleeping bag.
- Ten PET bottles are used in one square foot of carpet.
- Almost half of all polyester carpet produced in the US is made from recycled plastic bottles.

Source: NAPCOR (web site: www.napcor.com)

Recycling is a Team Effort that Requires Everyone's Support

Steps in Setting up the Program

- Select a team leader from your school to oversee the program's implementation and to serve as liaison with the D.C. Office of Recycling.
- Organize a team of students to support the project by assisting with outreach, monitoring bins for contamination, helping with classroom activities, and providing progress reports.
- Inform all staff and students about the pilot project emphasizing the importance of everyone's participation.
- Obtain the recycling bins through the D.C. Office of Recycling. PETE's Big Bins, provided by NAPCOR, are clear green in color, 37 inches high and 21 inches in diameter, and are made from about 150 recycled 20-ounce PET bottles. The best location for them is in the cafeteria near the beverage vending machine.
- Schedule a PET Recycling assembly program through the D.C. Office of Recycling. SWEEP, JR gives an interactive presentation to motivate children to improve levels of environmental sanitation by influencing awareness and attitudes. The program also educates and encourages waste reduction, reuse, and recycling (with emphasis on PET Recycling in the 10 pilot schools). SWEEP, JR also works to increase school and public participation in recycling and is involved in coordinated school clean-up and maintenance with the surrounding community.
- Post program flyers throughout the school. It is important that participants follow the instructions and only place empty PET drink bottles in the recycling bins.
- Plan classroom activities to support the program and teach students about recycling and solid waste topics. The D.C. Office of Recycling through its SWEEP, JR program offers educational, promotional, and curriculum materials that schools can use. The DC Office of Recycling will also loan teachers a PETE's Pack™ for use in their classrooms. PETE's Pack™ is a plastic recycling educational kit that contains educational materials and products made from recycled PET.
- Acknowledge the efforts of teacher and student organizers by presenting them with certificates and/or rewards.

The D.C. Office of Recycling is working with the hauler, Urban Services, Inc., to monitor the amount of PET recovered from each participating schools. Progress reports and the pilot results will be communicated to the schools.

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Roles and Responsibilities

D.C. Office of Recycling in cooperation with Urban Services, Inc.

- Arrange for placement of the recycling bins.
- Provide an assembly presentation at each school.
- Provide each school with up to 200 recycling flyers.
- Provide classroom activities and curricular materials for interested teachers.
- Loan the PETE's Pack™ educational kit to interested teachers.
- Monitor amount of PET recovered from each school.
- Provide progress reports to schools on a regular basis.

Participating Schools

- Inform all staff and students about the program.
- Identify a team leader and create a team of students to support the project.
- Schedule an assembly presentation by the D.C. Office of Recycling.
- Post promotional flyers throughout the school.
- Encourage teachers to support the program with related classroom lessons and activities.
- Review progress reports with all staff and students.
- Encourage ongoing participation in the program.



Partnering Organizations and Agencies

NAPCOR (the National Association for PET Container Resources) is funding the pilot project to address the organization's goal of recovering more PET beverage containers for recycling. NAPCOR is the national trade association for the manufacturers of PET resins and containers and for suppliers to the PET industry in the United States and Canada.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region III, is also providing support to the project. The mission of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is to protect human health and to safeguard the natural environment--air, water, and land--upon which life depends.

MACREDO (Mid-Atlantic Consortium of Recycling and Economic Development Officials) secured the project funding, is providing technical support in program implementation, and will disseminate the project results throughout the region. MACREDO is an organization that works to identify, promote, and implement projects and programs that enhance recycling and economic development opportunities on a regional basis.

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