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**INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:** JO ARCHIBALD

**FROM:** CONNOR WHITE

**SUBJECT:** RECOLOGY FIELD TRIP MEMO

**DATE:** OCT. 25, 2019

**Purpose**

The purpose of this memo is to recapitulate the field trip our Eng. 115 class took to the Recology Recycling Plant in Samoa, CA on Friday Oct. 18. This memo includes a detailed discussion of the staff presentation and different stages of the facility viewed on our tour.

**Discussion**

Recology is a company that handles organic, recyclable, and nonrecyclable waste in California, Oregon, and Washington. This site that we visited in Samoa, CA functions only as a recycling center. Our visit began with a short presentation given by our tour guide. He spent most of this first presentation detailing Recology as a company and the state of recycling as a global industry. Our guide told us that this specific site processes 1.5-2 tons of material per hour and 60-80 tons of material per day. More elaborate Recology recycling plants in San Francisco deal with thousands of tons of material every day.

Our tour started on the ground floor where incoming trucks dump their contents into large piles which is then pushed by bulldozer onto a conveyor belt. The belt takes material to the initial sorting stage, sorted by hand, which removes nonrecyclables. Recyclable plastics and metals are then separated from paper and glass. The glass and paper are sorted by fans and fiber “fingers” which blow paper upwards and allow glass to fall downwards, breaking it into pieces.

There are over 1000 different grades of plastic and this plant treats categories 1-7, covering the majority of consumer grade plastics. After sorting each different material, with the exception of glass, it is then compressed into bales which are then sold off. A major problem in the recycling industry worldwide is contamination by garbage and nonrecyclables, and it is the reason why China has stopped accepting our country’s recyclables. Now we send off to other places like Indonesia and India. Contamination content varies by facility but this one receives approximately 25% contaminated materials and set a goal of 10% contamination in their output. Our tour ended with a final presentation.

**Summary**

Our trip to Recology’s local recycling plant brought out mixed feelings. I learned much about the standards and difficulties innate to recycling as an industry which the general public does not but should be conscious of. I found out that many items I previously believed to be recyclable in fact were not, and that the reality is there is simply too much waste being generated for 100% of recyclable materials to actually become recycled. I was very glad to hear of this plant’s intentions of community outreach, because the only way to help the situation is to address the source: everybody.