
LAB MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Jo Archibald
FROM: Angel Ortiz
SUBJECT: Recology Recycling Plant Trip
DATE: 25/10/2019

PURPOSE

The purpose of this field trip was to learn about how and where our recycling takes place.

DISCUSSION

In this trip, we toured the recycling facility and noticed how trash was divided into cardboard, paper, plastic, glass, and tin. These separations of waste allow for the recycling to be properly discharged without chance for contamination. Cross-contamination is a significant problem in this industry, considering consumers are not properly informed about what is trash and recyclable, and corporations do not properly label containers for trash or recycling. The reason cross-contamination persists is by confusing low-grade fibers, such as napkins and egg cartons as recyclable, when they are trash. Additionally, plastics, such as cookie containers, are trash as well. Furthermore, cleanliness of waste is also a conspicuous issue in the industry. When containers are not properly emptied and cleaned, whole loads of waste are contaminated. These shipments are either reevaluated, which is costly and time-consuming, or sent to landfills. This means that waste is unnecessarily sent to landfills, when it could be recycled, over a simple task that people at home should do. Not only is this wasteful, but since 20% of our waste is sent to Oregon, and 80% is exported from Fortuna, means that money is lost. To begin with, the value of recyclables is incredible low; cardboard goes for \$60/ton, aluminum cans sell for \$.46/lb, 3-7 plastics are \$.03/lb, and milk jugs are \$.53/lb, while glass makes no profit considering processing and transportation costs. As mentioned earlier, our waste is exported to China, Indonesia, and Vietnam, however, all countries have implemented bans on the importation of recyclables from the USA, since they are so contaminated. This is an effort to clean up the environment in their countries; they are upholding the safety of their community opposed to making money from the waste.

CONCLUSION

After discovering that so much of the county's solid waste ends up in landfills versus recycling centers, it is imperative that consumers are better informed about packaging and how to dispose of it. People enable change and by encouraging consumers to demand changes in the policies and practices of large corporations, in terms or packaging, can shift solid waste to be sustainable and economical.