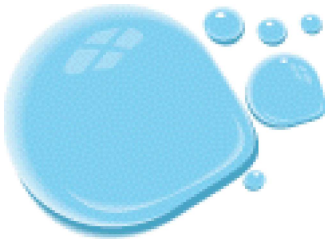


Conservation News

Environmental News and Information from the City of Melbourne
Public Works & Utilities Department ~ Environmental Community Outreach Division



Field Trip to the Materials Recover Facility

“Don’t Waste It” classroom instruction for local teachers was conducted during two sessions this summer by Environmental Programs Coordinator Megan Selva. Said one teacher in her review: “I enjoyed it and can’t wait to get back to the classroom for the activities.”

These sessions were conducted to help teachers instruct students about recycling and were supported by a field trip tour of the materials recovery facility (MRF) in Cocoa.

This MRF, owned by Waste Management (WM), became operational in 2015. It processes 8,500 tons per month. They sort through all of the recycling collected by WM throughout Brevard County and most of the recycling collected by Waste Pro and Republic. They also process portions of the recycling collected in Seminole and Orange Counties.

The facility will undergo upgrades in the next few months. This will include much more efficient optical sorters that will help them reduce contamination by

15-18 percent. The current recycling contamination rate in Brevard County is 35 percent. Plastic bags are the number one contaminant.

“Anything in plastic bags goes to the landfill,” said WM Government Affairs Manager Dina Reider-Hicks.

She noted that the bags could contain good recycling, or they could contain trash, or even needles. Their employees have gotten stuck by them in the past

and have had to undergo long-term medical treatment as a result.

Other common contaminants are food, including mayonnaise and peanut butter left in jars; tangles, including extension cords and Christmas lights; and hazardous material, such as propane tanks and car

batteries. Propane tanks have exploded at the MRF in the past and should never be thrown out in recycling carts.

Some of the contamination is the result of people trying to do what they think should be the right thing.

“There are a lot of ‘wishcyclers’ but if there is no end user, it goes to the landfill,” Reider-Hicks said.

Per regulations, there is only a 0.5% contamination rate allowed in the bales of recycling. All of the material that comes out of the facility goes to a market somewhere in the North America. Waste Management is the largest recycling company in North America. To make recycling even more efficient, Reider-Hicks noted that the MRF in Chicago is pilot testing

robots on the pre-sort line.

“Robots are expected to be more efficient and faster,” said Reider-Hicks. “No

employees would lose jobs. They would be re-trained to be quality-control experts.”

For more recycling information visit WM.com/recycleright or the City’s website at mlbfl.org.



Teachers, ECO staff and Waste Management staff at the recent MRF tour.



Recycling from homes ready to undergo the sorting process at the MRF.



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