

Congratulations 2014 Environmental Excellence Awards Recipients

The IAPD Environmental Committee is pleased to present the recipients of the 2014 IAPD Environmental Excellence Awards. The committee received an unprecedented number of applications this year. These recipients were honored at the opening general session at the 58th Annual IAPD Convention on October 28 in Chicago, IL, USA by IAPD Vice President and Convention Chair Kevin Short and IAPD President Jane Saale:

Best New Program — Polymer Industries

Best Recycling Program — Cope Plastics, Inc.

Best Overall Program — Laird Plastics

Polymer Industries was selected for its exemplary efforts to reduce the company's carbon footprint. Starting with waste management, Polymer Industries implemented programs that reduced its waste from 4 million pounds annually to 400,000 pounds. The company has saved more than 3 million pounds recyclable materials from going into landfills, all while being on an annual production growth path of double digits year over year for the past 10 years. In addition to the environmental benefits of this program, the cost savings have been what the company calls "staggering." Their program started with bailing cardboard, aluminum and paper, then they purchased a line that converts saw shavings from sheet extrusion and converts them into pellet form and, ultimately, into a viable sheet product that can be sold and reused. They have repurposed 400,000-500,000 pounds of what was at one time waste (high density polyethylene) HDPE into a utility grade of HDPE for resale. Scrap that they cannot convert themselves is sold to a recycler, which amounts to an average of 60,000 pounds per month. Beyond waste management, the company worked with its local government officials to bring natural gas to their community, which is a cleaner and more efficient fuel than liquefied petroleum gas, which had been in use previously. This switch also resulted in significant cost savings as well. In addition, the company has established a buy-back program for designated customers and they purchase approximately 200,000 pounds annually of ultra high molecular weight polyethylene (UHMW-

PE) products and 500,000 pounds annually of HDPE. They also repurpose approximately 100,000 pounds annually of post-consumer HDPE, such as recycled milk jugs. This is above and beyond the postindustrial regrind operations they engage in on a daily basis. The most recent environmental improvement is an energy-efficient lighting project throughout their operations.

Cope Plastics, Inc. has expanded its recycling program to include 36 different grades of plastic, which make up nearly 90 percent of the material distributed through or consumed by the company. This increase resulted from opening a supply scrap channel for five different polyvinyl chloride (PVC)



types. This new PVC outlet is forecasted to keep an additional 200,000 pounds of PVC scrap out of landfills annually. In 2012, Cope began a concentrated effort to regain scrap from customers. The past 12 months have begun to show the fruits of those efforts. Cope received 141,575 pounds in the 12-month period from July 2012 through June 2013. From July 2013 to June 2014 that number increased to 604,053 pounds. That represents an increase of 327 percent in customer scrap. In all of 2012 Cope received only 80,000 pounds. Just two short years later, Cope has a realistic shot at reaching 1 million pounds of customer scrap in 2014. The number of participating customers more than doubled (a 129 percent increase from 2013 to

Recycling Facts

"Recycling a ton of 'waste' has twice the economic impact of burying it in the ground. In addition, recycling one additional ton of waste will pay US\$101 more in salaries and wages, produce US\$275 more in goods and services and generate US\$135 more in sales than disposing of it in a landfill."

— From *Recycling: Good for the Economy, Good for the Environment*

2014). These increases in material throughput have caused an increased demand for labor. In the past 12 months, Cope has added two full-time employees and one part-time employee to its solar powered Processing Center located in Alton, IL, USA. Cope's environmental program now supports four full-time employees and two part-time employees. The Processing Center also has converted to an electric forklift, saving 50 pounds of liquid propane each week (2,600 pounds annually). In July of last year, Cope added a single-stream recycling program to its Corporate Headquarters and Processing Center. This single stream collection program allows employees to recycle post-consumer materials conveniently at work. The single-stream program collects cardboard, post-consumer plastic, steel and aluminum cans, and glass and paper containers. This program effectively offers single stream post-consumer recycling to more than 100 Cope employees who live in communities too small to offer curbside recycling. This program is responsible for an additional 200,000 pounds of post-consumer waste being diverted from area landfills. Cope has continued its programs to recycle scrap metal, electronics, bulk paper files, oil and coolant, batteries and light bulbs generated through industrial processes. It has also begun recycling wood pallets. In years past, broken and odd-sized pallets were hauled away to be burned. This year, Cope has partnered with a local pallet manufacturer that will take these unwanted and unusable pallets and turn them into mulch. This program diverts about 9,000 pounds each month from the burn pits and creates about 100,000 pounds of mulch annually.

Despite the increased resources required to move an additional 600,000 pounds of customer scrap as well as the costs to sustain the equivalent of three more employees, Cope's environmental program is still economically self-sustaining. The operation of the Processing Center has continued to be profitable and contributed positively to the bottom line at Cope Plastics, Inc. The salvage program that started in 2012 was designed to recover material that might be upcycled and used for prime consumption rather than recycling. Cope has identified and upcycled more than 120,000 pounds of material this year. The salvage program has also contributed thousands of dollars in profits from local sales.

Laird Plastics is in its sixth year of environmental stewardship and continues to devote significant resources to a business unit dedicated solely to sustainable supply chain management and domestic plastics recycling. The Laird Plastics business unit is responsible for the collection and analysis of environmental data and report these findings back to corporate leadership, customers and manufacturers. Recent accomplishments include recycling for 50 of its facilities and hundreds of customers throughout North America, recycling for customers in 47 states and seven Canadian provinces, recycling more than 12 million pounds of plastics in 2013, significantly reduced contaminated materials in their recycling stream, and continuing to promote its environmentally friendly corner guard, which is being used through its network as a replacement for cardboard.

"IAPD is proud to honor the accomplishments of these companies with the Environmental Excellence Award. Life cycle analyses show that plastics are often the most environmentally friendly material to use for applications and as shown in the examples from these three companies, the manufacturing of those plastics can also be done in an environmentally responsible manner," said Susan Avery, CAE, IAPD Chief Executive Officer.

Any IAPD member company is eligible to apply for the IAPD Annual Environmental Excellence Awards. Applications are collected online and the IAPD Environmental Committee determines the recipients via secret ballot. Applications for the 2015 IAPD Environmental Excellence Awards will be available in a few months. All applicants are eligible to join the IAPD GreenScene™ program, which honors all member companies that are engaging in environmentally friendly practices. GreenScene members receive a special logo to use on their website, in their marketing collateral, email signatures and elsewhere to promote their environmentally responsible business practices.

The IAPD Environmental Committee is dedicated to promoting environmental policies and best practices to the plastics industry.