

NW Commingled Workgroup: Focus on Plastics

Summary from Southwest
Workgroup on Plastics

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DEPARTMENT OF
ECOLOGY
State of Washington



Plastics

Collection

What is included?

Yes:

PET bottles, natural HDPE jugs, and colored HDPE bottles and jugs

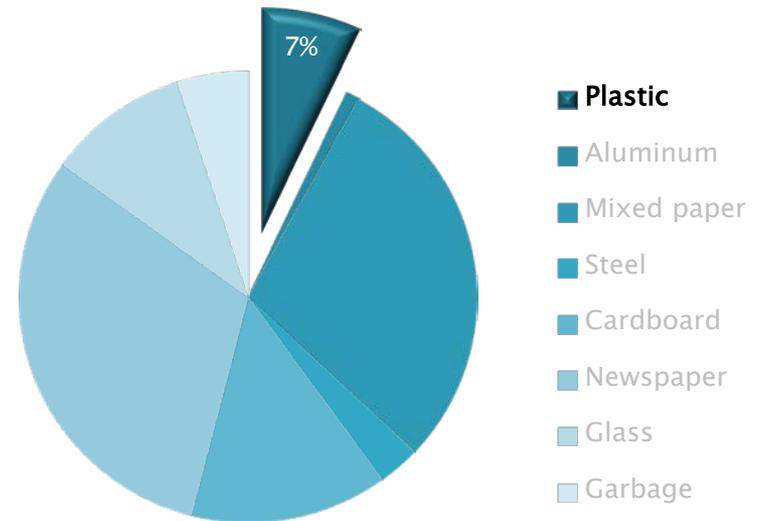
Maybe (some programs accept):

Plastic bags, buckets, dairy tubs and cups, pill bottles, nursery pots

No:

Expanded polystyrene, film, chip bags, frozen food bags, lids, caps, toys, HazWaste containers, trays or clamshells

How much is in the cart (by weight)?



Issues: Customer confusion, and more space in cart for non-program plastics. Problem occurs at collection and impacts processing.



Plastics

Processing

- ▶ **Quality of incoming:** Poor to good
- ▶ **Key Problems:** Film and non-program plastics
- ▶ **Not recovered:** Lids and small bottles (i.e. pill)
- ▶ **% of Revenue:** 14%

Areas of Improvement:

- Use container descriptions, not numbers in outreach
- If it's crinkly, stretchy or smaller than a fist – throw it out
- Do not flatten – cross contaminates with paper
- Rinsing is not a big issue– though could be due to frequent messaging
- Recommend at-curb checks for non-program materials

Problems with Film





Plastics

Markets

- ▶ **Domestic/Local** : Merlin Plastics, British Columbia; KW Plastics, Bakersfield, CA and Troy AL; Mohawk Industries, Calhoun, GA
- ▶ **Export: China**
 - Plastics have a strong export market. You can sell 99% of plastics. It's a high value commodity, but there are high labor costs to get it to the 'bale-quality' point. The more you sort it, the easier you can sell it.

Questions?

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