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Please sign your complaint. You may file an anonymous complaint if you wish; however, the grand jury is less likely to investigate anonymous complaints because they will not be able to contact you for clarification and follow-up. The jury is also less likely to get to the truth of the matter if it does choose to investigate.

- III. The grand jury will respond to your complaint and acknowledge its receipt. The grand jury may contact you directly during its inquiries.

# REQUEST FOR GRAND JURY ACTION

Placer County Grand Jury  
DeWitt Center  
11490 C Avenue, Auburn, CA 95603

*Notice: This form and any supplemental material will be treated confidentially. The Grand Jury is prohibited by law from disclosing any aspect of an inquiry prior to issuing a final report. For various reasons the Grand Jury cannot investigate all requests for action, therefore you may wish to pursue other avenues.*

Your Name		
Your Mailing Address	City	Zip Code
Home Telephone	Work Telephone	

## PERSON / AGENCY YOU ARE REPORTING

Name		
Address	City	Zip Code
Telephone		

Please use space on back of form for a brief narrative of key events.  
Attach any correspondence or documents about the subject.

## LIST OTHER OFFICIALS / AGENCIES YOU HAVE CONTACTED ABOUT THIS SUBJECT

Official / Agency	Address	Approximate date of contact

## PAST OR PENDING LAWSUITS

Explain what you know of past or pending lawsuits related to this matter

Your Signature:	Date:
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Please mail completed form to the Placer County Grand Jury Foreperson at the above address.  
For Official Use Only. Do not write in the space below.

Number:	Date Received:	Date Considered:
Disposition:		



# BLUE BAG RECYCLING PROGRAM ASSESSMENT



*Photo by Win Gredvig*

# **BLUE BAG RECYCLING PROGRAM ASSESSMENT**

## **Summary**

Four jurisdictions in Placer County utilize a voluntary Blue Bag Recycling Program. These are the cities of Auburn and Lincoln, the Town of Loomis, and unincorporated areas of Placer County. Residents and businesses place clean and dry recyclables in blue bags that are commingled with regular trash and transported to the Western Placer Waste Management Authority's Materials Recovery Facility for processing at a later date. The 2008–2009 Grand Jury agrees with last year's Jury in its recommendation that all Blue Bag Programs be eliminated. Because of the responses received from the cities of Lincoln and Auburn, this Grand Jury reinvestigated the program and determined the residents' time, effort and expense were of marginal value to any of the jurisdictions' recycling programs while additional costs were incurred in processing intact bags.

## **Background**

The 2007–2008 Grand Jury, in response to questions from residents concerning the effectiveness of the Western Placer County recycling program, conducted an investigation of the Western Placer Waste Management Authority's (WPWMA) Materials Recovery Facility (MRF, pronounced "Murf") in January 2008. That Grand Jury found the MRF to be well managed and using state-of-the-industry equipment and technology. The recyclable materials commingled with the other trash and garbage were easily and efficiently sorted, collected and packaged for sale.

The California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 (AB 939) mandated that 25% of refuse be recoverable by 1995 and 50% by 2000. Soon after, some Placer County jurisdictions started Blue Bag Programs that allowed citizens to voluntarily place clean recyclable items in blue plastic bags that were commingled with trash container contents. The bags were pulled off the sorting lines at the MRF and saved for later processing.

The 2007–2008 Grand Jury found the Blue Bag Program contributing marginally, if at all, to the overall recycling program. Because the MRF processes all commingled refuse so efficiently, that Grand Jury recommended the jurisdictions eliminate the Blue Bag Programs.

Opposition responses from the cities of Auburn and Lincoln caused the 2008–2009 Grand Jury to reopen the investigation into the viability of the Blue Bag Programs.

## **Investigation Methods**

On October 17, 2008, Jurors met at the MRF, listened to a presentation by Eric Oddo, WPWMA Senior Civil Engineer, asked questions and completed a tour of the entire facility. It began on the receiving floor where the trucks dumped the loads, then proceeded up to the next level where the receivables were sorted and recyclables collected. The tour ended where the refuse materials had been collected and readied for the landfill and recyclables compressed and packaged for sale. Jurors returned to the MRF in December to specifically follow the blue bags' path from the receiving floor and along the sorting line conveyor belts.

Jim Durfee, Executive Director of WPWMA, and Jim Estep, Lincoln City Manager, were interviewed in January 2009. Mr. Estep was accompanied by staff members, John Pedri and Steve Ambrose. Jurors asked about Blue Bag Program costs and its contribution to the recyclable recovery efforts.

## **Facts**

In their written responses to last year's Grand Jury report, the cities of Lincoln and Auburn disagreed with the 2007–2008 Grand Jury's recommendation to eliminate the Blue Bag Programs. Lincoln administrators stated the program elimination would require a substitution, such as a third can for recyclables, to meet its goals. Auburn's Mayor, Keith Nesbitt, stated, "The blue bag is a valuable educational tool that allows our citizens to participate in the recycling process at their home which naturally increases their awareness of waste issues." Jim Durfee indicated, in his written response, that the WPWMA would maintain a neutral position and process blue bags as long as jurisdictions elected to continue their programs.

In a January 2009 Grand Jury interview, Lincoln officials maintained the Blue Bag Program's elimination would require it to be replaced with an alternative program.

The WPWMA's addition of the MRF in the 1990's and its updating with the latest equipment and technology available in mid 2000's has increased its recycling capability and efficiency. The present processing system is effective and nearly all recyclables commingled with regular trash can be retrieved.

Within Western Placer County there are four jurisdictions presently implementing voluntary Blue Bag Programs. The programs began in the early 1990's prior to the modernization of the MRF, when resident participation was needed to separate recyclables from other trash. All four jurisdictions require recyclable items placed in the bags to be clean and dry, including various paper products, plastic/glass bottles and aluminum/tin cans.

The MRF processes the refuse collected from all of Placer County west of the City of Colfax. The Town of Loomis, City of Auburn and unincorporated areas of Placer County utilize the Auburn Placer Disposal Service (APDS) to pick up and transport refuse. The City of Lincoln collects its own trash and delivers it to the MRF. The Town of Loomis and City of Auburn provide residents blue bags at no charge and APDS delivers them. Lincoln residents are provided free bags, costing the City \$26,000 per year. Blue bags must be picked up at City Hall. Unincorporated area residents of Western Placer County must purchase blue bags at grocery stores. The filled bags are expected to be placed inside the container. Otherwise, the APDS driver will exit the cab to retrieve blue bags placed alongside a full container. The City of Lincoln requires filled blue bags to be placed inside the garbage container.

Blue bags comprise only a very small percentage of the total volume of processed refuse at the MRF. A large portion of the blue bags do not make it to the sorting lines in a retrievable condition. They are often ripped open by the sheer weight of the contents, items in the bag, sharp objects, compaction in the truck, etc. The bags provided to the residents for no charge tend to be made of thinner plastic than the purchased types and are torn open very easily. The blue bags themselves are presently not recyclable and are sent to the landfill.

Jurors observed the blue bags in various conditions when they started the path from the receiving floor to the sorting lines. Employees may retrieve an intact or partially damaged blue bag containing recyclables at any point after it reaches a sorting line belt

Although they said they had not determined the requirements of the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB), the officials again mentioned a third can program as a replacement or the possibility of using a facility other than the existing MRF.

Mr. Durfee testified to this Grand Jury that the benefits of the Blue Bag Programs are marginally positive and are cost neutral to Placer County. The participating jurisdictions and the public bear the costs. As he stated previously, the WPWMA maintains a neutral position and will process blue bags as long as programs exist.

The CIWMB recently approved the 2006 Diversion Rates and Lincoln achieved 60% by implementing 35 programs. In comparison, Rocklin achieved 58% implementing 31 programs and does not have a Blue Bag Program. There are 63 potential diversion programs listed by CIWMB. All jurisdictions in Placer County exceeded the State-mandated 50% Diversion Rate except the Town of Loomis. It received a board approved good faith effort of 48%.

Roseville and Rocklin, the two largest cities in Placer County, do not have Blue Bag or any other curbside sorting programs. Green waste is placed in a separate container.

The MRF in Placer County is classified as a “dirty MRF” waste processing facility and accepts refuse as a mixed solid stream. This type of treatment technology accepts waste and recyclable materials mixed together. All the garbage comes into the facility and a combination of mechanical methods, including shakers, screens, magnets, etc., is used to sort and collect materials. In addition, workers manually sort and collect recyclables from the trash as it moves along on the conveyor belt lines. Separation occurs within the plant rather than at the source or curbside. After all the recyclables are collected, the remaining waste material is transported to the landfill for disposal.

At the curbside or other collection point, a commingled refuse container is dumped into a collection truck, hauled to the MRF and the contents dumped onto the receiving floor. When blue bags reach the sorting lines, employees are instructed to retrieve the blue bags and drop them in a separate bin. At a later time, after sufficient numbers of bags have been accumulated, the filled bins are returned to the receiving floor and the bags are run through the same process as regular trash. The employees tear open the bags and shake the contents out onto the belts. The belt speed is reduced to a very slow pace so all recyclables can be retrieved.

and before it drops off the end of the line. In general, the bags can be categorized in the following ways:

- Bags are not retrievable and are treated as regular garbage:
  - Bags are badly damaged with no contents.
  - Bags are damaged and all contents fall out when grabbed by a sorter.
  - Bags are partially intact and all contents may be dislodged with a little shaking.
- Bags are retrievable and saved for sorting at a later date:
  - Bags are damaged but some or all the contents remain after it is grabbed.
  - Bags are not damaged at all.

Jurors had been told that all retrievable bags would be removed from the belts, saved and processed later. However, Jurors observed that some retrievable bags passed every worker on the line, dropped off the end of the belt and the unrecovered recyclables went to the landfill.

One benefit resulting from the programs served by APDS is that bags are allowed to be placed alongside a full trash container, making space available inside for additional trash.

## **Findings**

1. The MRF, with its updated equipment and use of technology, is a very well managed and efficient recycling facility. Its recyclable recovery program is improved marginally, if at all, by the Blue Bag Programs.
2. Making residents aware of the value of recycling is beneficial. However, Jurors found no evidence the time, effort or money spent on the Blue Bag Programs by residents contributed anything significant toward achieving the recycling goals of the jurisdictions.
3. Since the MRF is classified as “dirty”, any handling of separated recyclables, such as filled blue bags, adds to processing costs. Jurors found the blue bags added to the total cost of recycling programs in at least three ways.
  - a) The bags cost the residents money either directly by purchase or indirectly through town or city purchase.
  - b) Extra time and labor are required to retrieve bags placed alongside full containers.
  - c) Extra time and labor are required to process saved bag contents at a later time.

4. One negative aspect to eliminating the Blue Bag Program is that in some jurisdictions residents will lose the benefit of placing blue bags next to the full container. The extra space can save residents money by allowing more trash to be disposed of without paying for an additional container.

## **Recommendations**

1. Due to the recyclable recovery efficiency at the MRF, all Blue Bag Programs within Western Placer County should be eliminated.
2. All Western Placer County jurisdictions with Blue Bag Programs should notify their residents that their time, effort and expense marginally increase, if at all, the amount of materials recycled. The notice should educate the public on the effectiveness of the recycling process and the collection of comingled materials at the MRF. The notification could be a direct mailing or inclusion in the billing.

## **Request for Responses**

- Spencer Short, Mayor / #'s 1, 2 - Due by September 1, 2009  
City of Lincoln  
600 Sixth Street  
Lincoln, CA 95648
- Mike Holmes, Mayor / #'s 1, 2 - Due by September 1, 2009  
City of Auburn  
1225 Lincoln Way  
Auburn, CA 95603
- F. C. "Rocky" Rockholm, Chair / #'s 1, 2 - Due by September 1, 2009  
Placer County Board of Supervisors  
175 Fulweiler Avenue  
Auburn, CA 95603
- Walt Scherer, Mayor / #'s 1, 2 - Due by September 1, 2009  
Town of Loomis  
6140 Horseshoe Bar Road, Suite K  
Loomis, CA 95650
- Jim Durfee, Executive Director / #'s 1, 2 - Due by October 1, 2009  
WPWMA  
11476 C Avenue  
Auburn, CA 95603

# CHILD ABUSE REPORTING PROCEDURES WITHIN PLACER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS



# **CHILD ABUSE REPORTING PROCEDURES WITHIN PLACER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

## **Summary**

Teachers are often the first to witness symptoms of child abuse. The Grand Jury investigated child abuse reporting procedures at three schools in Placer County. The school staff interviewed during the investigation were found to be knowledgeable and well trained in matters involving reporting suspected child abuse. They were aware of their responsibilities as mandated child abuse reporters which are required by the State of California Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act.

## **Background**

In the 2007–2008 Grand Jury Final Report, the Jury made recommendations designed to correct what they found to be deficiencies in staff’s knowledge of child abuse reporting requirements at some schools. The 2007–2008 Grand Jury made the recommendation that: “...all Placer County Schools have consistent policies and procedures for reporting child abuse available for any mandated reporter to review. All new school employees should be trained and current employees annually updated on child abuse reporting...”

The 2008–2009 Grand Jury decided to do a follow-up investigation into the child abuse reporting process with several schools in Placer County.

## **Investigation Methods**

Jurors were divided into teams. Team members visited unannounced, randomly selected schools, on the same day, at approximately the same time. Schools were selected in three different districts within Placer County. Each team had the same list of prepared questions regarding child abuse reporting procedures. The schools visited were Twelve Bridges Elementary School (located in Western Placer Unified School District), Rocklin High School (located in Rocklin Unified School District), and Quail Glen Elementary School (located in Dry Creek Elementary School District).