

SUSTAINABLE TIMES



American
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Extender producer responsibility requirements are changing how packaging is designed, measured, and documented. This edition summarizes key developments and highlights practical pathways APC can help you evaluate.

PACKAGING POLICY UPDATE

EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY CONTINUES TO SHAPE PACKAGING DECISIONS

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs are accelerating across the United States, with California's framework drawing significant attention. California Senate Bill 54 (SB 54) establishes statewide plastic source-reduction targets beginning at 10% in 2027 increasing to 25% by 2032.

These targets apply collectively to producers placing covered products in the California market. Individual brands will be expected to contribute their fair share through packaging changes and other approved measures. The program also addresses reuse, component reduction, and design for recyclability, with major recyclability requirements scheduled for 2032.

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RECYCLED CONTENT

CERTIFIED PCR MAY SUPPORT SOURCE-REDUCTION GOALS

Under the current framework, up to 8% certified post-consumer recycled (PCR) content may count toward the ultimate 25% plastic source-reduction target. The Association of Plastic Recyclers (APR) is involved in developing certification criteria, and only qualifying certified PCR is expected to count toward this allowance.

Implementation details continue to evolve. APC is working with its PCR suppliers to confirm that they are pursuing the appropriate APR certification pathways. Customers considering PCR should plan for documentation, availability, performance, and regulatory eligibility as part of material selection.

SOURCE REDUCTION

SEVERAL DESIGN STRATEGIES CAN REDUCE PLASTIC USE

Source reduction can be achieved by reducing package dimensions, lightweighting structures, optimizing material gauges, selecting alternative constructions, or reducing the number of packaging components. A change should not move a package from a recyclable classification to a non-recyclable one simply to reduce weight. APC is introducing numerous packaging

innovations designed to support these goals, including spout and valve alternatives for liquid packaging and coffee applications. The best approach depends on product protection, converting performance, filling conditions, distribution demands, and the customer experience.

DESIGN FOR RECYCLABILITY

ALL-PE STRUCTURES ARE AN IMPORTANT PATHWAY FOR FLEXIBLE PACKAGING

SB 54 requires covered packaging to meet recyclability requirements by 2032. For film-based packaging, the legislation references APR design guidance. In this category, polyethylene-based structures are currently the primary pathway considered compatible with the applicable recycling stream.

APC offers a broad portfolio of PE-based packaging options for a range of applications. These structures can have a narrower processing window than conventional mixed-material laminates, but advances in resin, film, sealing, and converting technology continue to improve runability and performance.

APPLICATION SPOTLIGHT

RECYCLABLE LAP-SEAL PACKAGING FOR SNACK APPLICATIONS

High-volume snack packaging is commonly produced on vertical form-fill-seal equipment as pillow bags or side-gusseted bags. A lap seal can reduce material use compared with a traditional fin seal while maintaining the package dimensions needed for the product and equipment.

APC has developed an all-PE, design-for-recycling option for lap-seal applications. Barrier and non-barrier versions are available, allowing customers to evaluate the balance among product protection, shelf life, machine performance, appearance, and recyclability goals.



Figure 1: Design for Recycle Store Drop-Off, Lap-Seal Package

PAPER-BASED PACKAGING

A PROMISING OPTION WHEN THE STRUCTURE AND APPLICATION ARE COMPATIBLE



Figure 2: Paper-Based, Design for Recycle Option for Numerous Dry and BarWrap Applications

Paper-based packaging is gaining interest because some constructions may qualify for recycling in mixed-paper curbside streams. However, paper content alone does not make a package recyclable. The complete structure must be evaluated and tested against the requirements of the intended recycling stream.

Paper also needs added functionality to meet real packaging demands, including shelf-life protection, durability, package formation, sealing, and print performance. For this reason, not every product or filling environment is a suitable candidate.

APC has developed a paper-based laminate that has passed applicable recyclability requirements. The structure is primarily paper with a thin metallized layer and is being evaluated for dry-product formats such as sachets, three-side-seal pouches, spice and dry-mix packages, soups, concentrates, confectionery flow wraps, nutritional products, and bar-wrap applications.

HOW APC CAN HELP

EPR programs and their implementation details will continue to evolve. APC can help customers evaluate packaging structures, source-reduction opportunities, PCR options, design-for-recycling pathways, and application-specific performance considerations.

Contact your APC representative to discuss your packaging goals and identify the next practical steps for development and testing.

OUR MISSION

Sustainable Times is a quarterly newsletter compiled by American Packaging Corporation that is designed to educate, provide industry highlights and keep you informed of sustainable solutions being developed by APC. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your sales representative or Jeff Travis at jtravis@americanpackaging.com.

