

## **A First -- UNC Recycles Plastic Bags and Shrink Wrap at Student Move-In**

CHAPEL HILL – During fall semester move-in weekend August 22-23, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Office of Waste Reduction and Recycling partnered with the Orange County Solid Waste Management Department, the Harris Teeter grocery store chain and American Chemistry Council to recycle almost 300 pounds plastic bags and shrink wrap from incoming students, saving almost 10 cubic yards of landfill space. This recycling collection event was a first, complementing the annual mandatory effort at UNC student move-in to divert corrugated cardboard for recycling.

The pilot project was aimed at increasing recycling on campus and decreasing the amount of waste entering the landfill. It was targeted at south campus dormitories. These dorms have the highest concentration of incoming first-year students, who typically arrive with a large amount of packing material from furniture, including a significant volume of shrink wrap.

Because the Orange County Landfill is projected to reach capacity in mid-2012 and because UNC is aggressively pursuing waste reduction, UNC feels it is important to expand recycling efforts in this area. Further, this represented an opportunity to explore the feasibility of expanding collection of bags and shrink wrap campus-wide. It has already sparked interest from Carolina Dining Services in recycling the shrink-wrap surrounding their incoming food packaging.

The amount of plastic bags recycled at UNC over the weekend was 252 cubic feet, totaling an estimated 265 pounds. Staffers at the waste collection sites at dorms reported no problems in getting students to separate the plastic bags and shrink wrap along with their cardboard. Office of Waste Reduction Recycling/Outreach Coordinator, Amy Preble said, “We were pleasantly surprised at how well this worked and look forward to integrating it into move-in every year. While the weight isn’t much, volume is significant. Now all that’s left to tackle is block packing foam for us to achieve a close-to-zero waste move-in”.

At the end of the weekend, UNC staff dropped off the plastic bags and shrink wrap at a Harris Teeter grocery store. They were baled along with other shrink wrap and bags from the grocery chain and shipped to Trex, a company in Winchester Virginia specializing in composite lumber for use in decks, playground equipment and other products.

For more information about plastic bag recycling, visit [www.plasticbagrecycling.org](http://www.plasticbagrecycling.org)



Gary Smith L. , materials handling specialist with UNC's Office of Waste Reduction and Cameron Monie, an intern funded by American Chemistry Council to work on plastic bag and shrink wrap recycling, with a van full of plastic bags and shrink wrap for recycling.

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