

Sustainable Acquisition Success Story

Product Spotlight on Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

LLNL's Biobased & Compostable Takeout Dishware Reduces Waste to Landfill

LLNL has around 6,600 employees and two onsite cafeterias that process approximately 30,000 transactions per month. In 2011 in compliance with AB341 and an associated Alameda County ordinance, LLNL implemented a recycling and composting program in both cafeterias and 13 of their buildings. However, people were disposing of items in the incorrect bins so to simplify things, they transitioned all their takeout dishware to biobased, compostable products.

LLNL's Durable Dishware

For people eating in the cafeterias, LLNL continues to provide and encourage the use of durable (washable and reusable) dishware--plates, glasses, bowls, and silverware. They have had issues with silverware disappearing (sometimes they are thrown away or taken to the office), so they are constantly replenishing silverware and have been working on improvements.

LLNL's Takeout Dishware

For those who want their meals to go, the Operations & Business, Facilities & Infrastructure, and ES&H divisions collaborated to set and meet biobased purchasing goals for takeout dishware. Key goals were meeting the requirements for biobased content and compostability since LLNL has a composting service.

In the U.S. Department of Agriculture BioPreferred catalog, LLNL was able to identify products their Office Supply Vendor sold that met the LLNL goals. By leveraging that existing relationship, they received discounts up to approximately 20%, which helped deflect the higher price of the biobased, compostable takeout dishware. LLNL's new takeout cafeteria products include hot cups, cold cups, cutlery, lids, straws, takeout containers, napkins, soup cups, small sides/condiment containers, and to go bags.

The compostable waste is picked up weekly by Livermore Sanitation and taken to a local commercial composting facility. As the number of products that are compostable have increased, the amount of waste sent to the landfill has already significantly decreased-- 23 metric tons in FY2017. To assist with calculating waste diversion from the new program, LLNL purchased a weight device that will affix to their garbage truck to give an accurate measurement.



New waste disposal

Next Steps

- Work with the Food Services Vendor to create an incentives program to encourage better use of durable dishware.
- Find a larger in-cafeteria salad bowl for the salad bar since they currently only have a small durable plate while the takeout container that holds twice as much.
- Revive their refillables and reusables program—containers and cups that when returned for refills would give the customer a discount.
- Gather more accurate waste diversion data.

Keys to Success

Challenges

Finding products that met performance needs, testing them, and lowering life-cycle cost.

Solution

LLNL replaced their traditional food service takeout dishware with products that have biobased content and are compostable.

Results/Benefits

- Simplifies waste sorting process for employees
- Greatly improves quality of waste diversion
- Reduces amount of waste sent to the landfill (23 metric tons in FY2017)
- Results in compost that can be used for soil enrichment/remediation and erosion control

Product Spotlight

Product Type: Café Compostable Products

Sustainable Attributes: Biobased

Brand: ECO Products

Website: ecoproductsstore.com

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