Statement on Metal Handles on Plastic Buckets

Plastic recyclers prefer plastic handles over metal handles for plastic buckets and pails. Converting to plastic from metal handles improves the package's recyclability in many ways.

1. It removes contamination for plastic recycling – the metal handle.
2. It increases the marketing options of pails and buckets as they have a greater opportunity to be processed domestically.
3. It increases the market value potential of pails and buckets.

Plastics handles add to market value of recycled pails and buckets. Most domestic plastic reclaimers consider metal a contaminant that causes wear and tear on recycling equipment. Consequently, rigid plastic material containing metal handles can decrease the market value. Plastic handles on plastic pails and buckets allow for a higher recovery rate and recycled package.

Metal handles on plastic buckets and pails are considered detrimental to recycling. APR defines detrimental as “features that present known technical challenges for the MRF or recycler’s operations, yield or final product quality, but are grudgingly tolerated and accepted by the majority of MRFs and recyclers.”

Please note that this statement is intended for manufacturers, vendors and end-users of plastic buckets and pails. For recommendations regarding plastics packaging design, please refer to the APR Design® Guide for Plastics Recyclability which can be found at www.plasticsrecycling.org/apr-design-guide/apr-design-guide-home

The Association of Plastic Recyclers (APR) is “The Voice of Plastics Recycling.” As the international trade association representing the plastics recycling industry, membership includes independent recycling companies of all sizes, processing numerous resins, as well as consumer product companies, equipment manufacturers, testing laboratories, organizations, and others committed to the success of plastics recycling. APR works to enhance quality and increase supply through technical resources, testing programs, design solutions, corporate training, regulatory leadership and education programs.