BACK IN 1989, the state of California passed AB 939. It was the first bill of its kind and established new waste diversion goals for local communities. In metro-Bakersfield, initial programs included residential curbside greenwaste programs and community drop-off and tow-for-dow recycling programs. Preliminary diversion results were good and soon, both programs were widely accepted.

A lot has changed since then, and in 2013, Kern County took a giant step in the name of recycling. Decades old programs are making way for a new curbside universal residential recycling programs throughout metro Bakersfield.

Beginning in early 2013, blue carts began appearing in Bakersfield neighborhoods. The blue carts can be filled with a variety of recyclable material including plastic bottles, aluminum cans, newspaper, glass, cardboard, junk mail, steel and tin cans.

Blue carts are picked up biweekly in addition to the weekly collection of regular household trash and greenwaste. At maturity, the addition of curbside recycling, at 43,000 metro-Bakersfield homes, is estimated to generate 9,000 tons of additional recycling per year for Kern County.

JUST AS residential programs have leaped forward, commercial businesses, government agencies and multi-residential complexes will be incorporating recycling into their waste management strategies.

Effective July 1, 2012, AB 341 requires that businesses generating four cubic yards or more of commercial solid waste per week, or multifamily residential dwellings of five units or more, Must recycle. Businesses can take any of the following actions in order to comply with AB 341: self-recycle and self-certify compliance; subscribe to a source-separated recycling service or a mixed waste recycling service from a local franchise hauler. Kern County businesses choosing to self-recycle can self-certify their compliance with the state mandates online at KernCountyWaste.com/recycling/business-recycling.

"Switching our focus to commercial waste will produce larger diversion totals for the County, given that commercial businesses generate the majority of the trash disposed in California", said Landon.

The Mandatory Commercial Recycling Law was implemented to help focus on the commercially-generated part of the waste stream. Cardboard and paper are the largest culprits and businesses generate tons of these materials.
Parallel legislation was passed, under AB 1826, for commercial organics recycling. This additional legislation will begin to impact some businesses, with new recycling requirements, as early as January 2016. AB 1826 requires that, after January 2019, businesses generating 4-cubic yards of solid waste must recycle organic materials, such as yard waste and food waste, separately.

Kern County businesses, looking for recycling options, may contact the Kern County Waste Management Department or their local hauler to learn more about the alternatives available to them. Residents and businesses can also check out the Waste Management Department website at KernCountyWaste.com for more information on waste disposal and diversion programs.

Since AB 341, voted into law in 2011, sets a goal that not less than 75% of solid waste generated be reduced, recycled or composted by 2020, the Kern County Waste Management Department (KCWMD) sought to achieve the goal by spreading the cost of infrastructure, equipment and processes among all metro Bakersfield residents, so it made sense to move forward in tandem with the City of Bakersfield’s curbside recycling program implementation.

According to Doug Landon, Director of KCWMD, "the statewide 75% diversion goal and Bakersfield's implementation of a residential curbside recycling program set the groundwork enabling the County to leverage investments, provide the greatest efficiencies and lowest cost to our residents."

Because KCWMD does not provide direct waste collection operations, the metro Bakersfield Waste Haulers are the County's implementation partners. This public-private partnership, with six local haulers, is key to cost containment and swift implementation. The curbside program meets all Cal Recycle requirements and will move the County forward in meeting critical state-mandated goals.

In addition to metro-Bakersfield, most outlying communities offer voluntary curbside recycling. Arvin, California City, Delano, McFarland, Ridgecrest and Golden Hills have established universal curbside recycling programs. Residents can contact their local hauler for details.

The Community Education and Outreach staff also participate in community events, company activities and service club programs to help people understand the types of materials suitable for the blue cart. "A blue cart filled with clean recyclable materials is paramount to the program’s success. Our job is to help residents understand what can be recycled - to make their job easier," said Landon.
California has been tackling the problem of waste disposal and recycling for more than two decades. AB 939 kick-started the movement in 1989. What followed, was a series of mandates, created through both Assembly and Senate bills, to divert everything from computer screens to soda bottles, cell phones to newspaper, cardboard to batteries.

Kern County has been diligently working to meet all of the legislated regulations. Efforts, begun years ago, are saving landfill space and helping the County stay in compliance. But, as recycling programs mature and additional requirements are set, we must adapt our operations to meet the changing need.

To that end, the Kern County Waste Management Department is working with local waste haulers to provide new recycling options. In 2013, Kern County and the city of Bakersfield instituted a residential blue cart curbside recycling program. The program facilitates consistent service provision across metro-Bakersfield. Residents can recycle aluminum cans, plastic bottles, beverage glass containers, newspaper, cardboard, junk mail, telephone books and tin/steel cans in their blue cart. The blue cart is picked up biweekly. The County is currently working to establish similar programs with haulers in outlying areas.

According to a Statewide Waste Characterization study, the commercial sector generates nearly 60% of the trash in California. Much of this trash, disposed of in landfills, is readily recyclable. The commercial recycling mandate is designed to target a significant commercial waste source and provide commercial customers with options. Kern County businesses are already showing their innovation through the creation of unique programs designed for the greatest diversion possible.

The world of trash disposal and recycling continues to morph. The Kern County Waste Management Department recognizes, as Alexandra Stoddard so richly put it, "What we do today, right now, will have an accumulated effect on all of our tomorrows."

It already has.

**DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS**

Doug Landon  
Director, KCWMD

"What we do today, right now, will have an accumulated effect on all of our tomorrows."

— Alexandra Stoddard

Knowing what to do with medical waste can be hard – especially needles, syringes and lancets, otherwise known as “sharps”. Used, home-generated sharps should be placed, immediately after use, in a “Biohazard” sharps container, available FREE at select pharmacies or at a Special Waste Facility in Mojave, Bakersfield or Ridgecrest. When the container is full, return it to a Special Waste Facility and pick up another. Log onto KernCountyWaste.com for days and hours of operation at the facilities.

KCWMD can’t accept sharps in any other container. Currently, residents are using plastic bottles, coffee cans and even paper bags for storage - and then putting the prohibited containers into their blue cart for recycling. THIS MUST STOP! *Sharps are not recyclable* and have led to injury at the recycling center. For more information on the Sharps Disposal Program, log onto KernCountyWaste.com or call 661-862-8922.