

These minutes follow an invitation from a major food trade association to its members requesting their attendance at a communications strategy meeting on Thursday, May 28, 2009 in Washington, DC. *Obtained by Environmental Working Group*
<http://www.ewg.org>

Meeting Minutes

North American Metal Packaging Alliance, Inc.

May 28, 2009

10:00 a.m. – 3:10 p.m. EDT

RE: BPA Joint Trade Association Meeting on Communications Strategy

Meeting Goal: Develop potential communication/media strategies around BPA

Discussion Topics: Consideration of available web-based communication options, including targeted geographies, as well as mainstream media response

Attending Companies: Coca-Cola, Alcoa, Crown, North American Metal Packaging Alliance, Inc., Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA), American Chemistry Council, Del Monte

Summary: Attendees discussed the need to be more proactive in communications to media, legislators, and the general public to protect industries that use BPA, prolong the life of BPA, put risks from chemicals in proper perspective, and transcend the media and the blogosphere. Attendees believe a balance of legislative and grassroots outreach (to young mothers ages 21-35 and students) is imperative to the stability of their industry; however, the association members continue to struggle to initiate research and develop a clear-cut plan to defend their industry. The committee will spend approximately \$500,000 to develop a survey on consumer BPA perceptions and messaging and eventually

content and outreach materials. Overall, the committee seemed disorganized, and its members frustrated. Lack of direction from the committee and these associations could continue to allow other associations and environmental groups to push BPA out.

Other Points: Attendees suggested using fear tactics (e.g. “Do you want to have access to baby food anymore?”) as well as giving control back to consumers (e.g. you have a choice between the more expensive product that is frozen or fresh or foods packaged in cans) as ways to dissuade people from choosing BPA-free packaging. Attendees noted, in the past, the different associations have had a reactive strategy with the media, with very limited proactive outreach in reaching out to journalists. The committee agrees they need to promote new, relevant content to get the BPA perspective into the media mix. The committee believes industry studies are tainted from the public perspective.

The committee doubts **social media outlets**, such as Facebook or Twitter, will work for positive BPA outreach. The committee wants to focus on quality instead of quantity in disseminating messages (e.g. a young kid or pregnant mother providing a positive quote about BPA, a testimonial from an outside expert, providing positive video, advice from third party experts, and relevant messaging on the GMA website). Members noted traditional media outreach has become too expensive (they have already spent hundreds of thousands of dollars) and the media is starting to ignore their side. **The committee doubts obtaining a scientific spokesperson is attainable. Their “holy grail” spokesperson would be a “pregnant young mother who would be willing to speak around the country about the benefits of BPA.”**

Eventually, the committee concluded before deciding on the tactics to spread their messages, they need to develop the messages. The committees plan to fund a joint survey and message testing—what new messages they need to sell—before implementing a website and creating materials. Another task group

will be implemented to finalize how to develop messages and aggressively use electronic media to deliver those messages.

Members noted the industry needs research on how perceptions of BPA are translating into consumer behavior—Is it translating into most moms not buying canned products or just a minority of moms? They hope to form messages relevant to how people live their lives—What does not having BPA mean to your daily lifestyle? **Focusing on the impact of BPA bans on minorities (Hispanic and African American) and poor is also important.** The members want to put the danger of BPA into perspective.

Legislatively, the committee is focusing on Connecticut and California.

Committee members are meeting with as many representatives on the Health Committee as possible. The members are focusing on more legislative battles and **befriending people that are able to manipulate the legislative process.** They believe a grassroots and legislative approach is favorable because the legislators worry about how the moms will react. If the Connecticut bill goes through, the committee believes it will be a good opportunity to talk about the negative impact that ban will have on businesses and employment—How will it affect the union workers? The committee wants to put a proposal together for the right way to deal with legislative issues in each state.

The committee discussed **Prop 65 in California**—requiring the Governor to publish, at least annually, a list of chemicals known to the state to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity. The committee will form a coalition to write a submission about the benefits of using BPA by the deadline for submissions on June 30, 2009. Members will also build up their contact base in Sacramento. The committee does not want to win at the legislative level and then not have anyone to buy the product.

The committee questioned whether or not trade associations should challenge what is being said about BPA. Other trade associations for plastics have begun writing letters in response to “lies” being told about BPA. The committee proposed to be involved in the dialog and comment electronically and directly back to reporters. Attendees noted it does not matter what the next material is, there will be issues with it, and the committee wants to work to make people feel more comfortable with BPA and “BPA2” or whatever chemical comes next.

The committee suggested dividing the costs of the work and research equally by the members. The members are guesstimating it will cost at least \$200,000 for the message testing and the survey and \$500,000 for the entire project. The committee is also looking for new members to help with costs and outreach.