

## Kaiser Permanente Southern California - Diverting Linen from Landfills

**Environmental and Human Health Impact:** Annual landfill diversion of over 44 tons of non-reclaimable linen.

**Business Impact:** Approximately \$7,000 annual cost savings associated with landfill fees KP is able to avoid.

### Challenge

The quality of a patient's hospital experience is based on many factors, including clinical care and room comfort. Factors that can impact room comfort include warmth of room, noise level, and of course the quality of the linens. When linen becomes stained or frayed, it is no longer acceptable for patient care use, and it is returned to the linen department and indicated as "non-reclaimable" or old linen. In many cases old linen is shredded and stored for emergencies like floods. However, in 2007 KP's Southern California (SCAL) region found that they still had a tremendous annual excess of old linen and sought an avenue of disposal that didn't involve sending it to a landfill.

### Aim/Goal

- Establish an environmentally preferable method to re-use the tonnage of non-reclaimable linen generated daily at KP medical centers, in an effort to avoid waste and landfill fees.

### Team

Rosetta Perkins, Product Support, SCAL Linen & Laundry Manager  
Danilo Sim, Sourcing Manager, Procurement & Supply  
Lior Yekutieli, Executive Director, Sandler Bros

### Actions Taken

- ✓ In 2007 KP began partnering with Sandler Bros., a company that processes and re-sells old linens (including OR apparel) nationally and internationally.
- ✓ This partnership allows KP's SCAL region to avoid large landfill fees associated with heavy material such as linen, and to direct our "waste" to another person's "gold".
- ✓ Sandler Bros. re-sells the old linen around the world to countries including England, South Africa, and Australia for uses such as drop cloths, dust covers, and moving wrappers for the transportation of fiberglass airplane parts on cargo ships.

### Results

**Over 44 tons of non-reclaimable linen is recycled, reused, and or re-purposed annually.**



\*Photo of old linen ready for re-deployment

### Lessons Learned

- ✓ Keep an open mind. Many materials can have a second life after their initial purpose is fulfilled.
- ✓ Seek and partner with suppliers with similar views and goals.

### Next Steps

- ✓ Maintain current program and explore possible expansion to include as many outlying medical office buildings as possible.
- ✓ Stimulate awareness through education and awareness events regarding the importance of avoiding additional unnecessary waste to landfills.
- ✓ Evaluate other Kaiser Permanente geographical regions to assess if a similar program can be implemented.
- ✓ Continue to research market for methods to enhance current recycle program.