Composting at Oakland International Airport

Who: Oakland International Airport (OAK)
Where: United States of America
What: A food waste composting programme
When: 2004
Why: Reducing and recycling food waste

Encouraged practices
- Environmentally-responsible packaging use is encouraged by the airport for all concessionaires.
- Washable trays are used by all food vendors with dine-in seating areas. Rewashable (stainless steel) cutlery is not an option at the airport, due to security concerns. Most food is packaged in disposable packaging to make it possible to carry-on flights (due to declining nature of in-flight food service).

The City of Oakland recently passed an ordinance prohibiting the use of polystyrene containers in food service. Many vendors are investigating new compostable "clamshells" and drink cups. The decreased cost of these products as they become the industry standard will make possible the transition to compostable dishes and take-away containers at the airport, allowing the airport to collect post-consumer waste as compostable material in the near future.

Oakland Airport will work to encourage all airport concessionaires to use compostable cutlery, plates, cups, and other packaging for take-away items. Once this transition is complete, almost all the "garbage" produced by customers will be compostable, so no sorting will be needed, and contamination should be minimal. At such time, post-consumer compostables will be collected at all dining areas throughout both terminals.

Recycling other rubbish
Recycling at Oakland Airport has been tracked for the last seven years. Co-mingled recycling (mixed paper and cardboard, clear bags with bottles and cans) is collected in compactors and by the airlines on-board. Oakland Airport has gone from recycling around 70 tonnes in 2001 to over 420 tonnes last year.

Company profile:
For more than 80 years, Oakland International Airport (OAK) has been an important part of the San Francisco Bay area. The airport complex and other OAK-related aviation businesses employ 8,000 people, of which roughly one-third are in jobs related to cargo.

The original airport at North Field was built in 1927 and is still in operation today for air cargo, general aviation and corporate jet activities. Commercial passenger and cargo jet aircraft operate from South Field, which opened in 1962.

The airport is a thriving business, handling around 14.5 million passengers and nearly 688,000 metric tonnes of air cargo in 2006.

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