

## Introduction

Welcome to Week 9 of CGOP! For a refresher on past newsletters, check out our website [here](#). This week we will be discussing Elective Action #11.

11. Eliminate bottled water purchases in favor of tap water, unless bottled is absolutely necessary.

As a reminder, completion of five Elective Actions beyond the Required Actions will earn you Bronze level certification, completion of ten will earn Silver level certification, and fifteen Elective Actions will earn Gold level certification.

## Instructions

***Elective Action #11: Eliminate bottled water purchases in favor of tap water, unless bottled is absolutely necessary.***

Let's start this week off with some trivia questions:

1. How many disposable plastic water bottles are drunk by Americans every year?
  - a. 500 million
  - b. 10 billion
  - c. 30 billion
  - d. 50 billion
  - e. 75 billion

(Of course, quantifying such large numbers can be quite the challenge for most people, so we won't be grading your guesses.)

Answer:

[\(d\) - 50 billion](#)

It's safe to say we have quite the attachment to these bottles and their convenience. Assuming a population of around 325 million people, that's an average of approximately 154 bottles per person per year.

2. In 2014, what was the recycling rate for plastic bottles in the U.S.?
  - a. 17%
  - b. 31%
  - c. 53%

- d. 77%
- e. 92%

Answer:

[\(b\) 31%](#)

Yikes. We're not doing so hot, to be frank. Considering that the rate for total household recyclables is 34%, there is some work to be done here. There are a number of reasons we can't keep consuming and not recycling plastic at this rate. First and foremost are of course the climate concerns -- producing 50 billion or more plastic bottles a year (for one country alone) requires what is not an insignificant amount of carbon based energy. Next, there's the fact that polyethylene terephthalate (or PET) plastic does not decompose. That leaves non-recycled bottles with one of two likely fates: sitting in a landfill forever, where they leach toxins into the soil, or if not responsibly disposed of, finding their way eventually into the oceans, where they will eventually reach one of the five great garbage patches swirling in our seas. Lastly, our supplies of plastic are not going to last forever. Earth's resources are finite and it does no help for us to use them up faster than we can develop replacements.

Thankfully, water is widely available out of taps and drinking fountains. We don't need to depend on bottled water at all. Encourage your employees and coworkers to bring and refill reusable water bottles. They'll probably find this a whole lot easier, and much cheaper, in the long run than purchasing cases and cases of disposable bottles. For those in the office that are uncomfortable drinking unfiltered tap water, it could be a wise investment to purchase a [water-filtering pitcher](#) or [filters for the sink](#) itself.\* Though it's also worth considering that the source of our tap water is the Mahomet Aquifer, one of the cleanest and freshest aquifers in the country. It scarcely needs any filtering!

In short: our usage of disposable plastic is a huge problem. One product which we can easily make a significant reduction without that much effort or change to our lifestyles (or offices!) is plastic water bottles. Purchase them only when you are *absolutely* sure they are necessary!

*\*Please note that we're not necessarily recommending any of these particular products -- the links are only to show examples of these products. Filters can be bought at many stores around town, meaning you don't need to order from the Internet unless you prefer to do so.*

Please see the attached "Reduce Plastic Waste" document for further information on our recommendations, including how to get customized water bottles for your office!