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LATHER Adds EcoPure[®] to Amenities Packaging

PASADENA, CALIF.—LATHER, the Los Angeles-based personal care and hotel amenities company, has begun offering its bath and shower amenities in biodegradable plastic packaging. Drawing on a new additive called EcoPure, packaging will be able to biodegrade within a landfill and be turned into new plastic products when recycled. This new initiative earned LATHER a Star of the Industry Award for “Technology Innovator of the Year” from the California branch of the American Hotel & Lodging Association (CH&LA, AH&LA). LATHER is the inaugural winner of this award for the state of California, and the first vendor to win a Star of the Industry Award.

What is EcoPure? In short, it is an FDA-approved, organic additive that can be blended in small amounts into most types of plastic. This technology exponentially accelerates the biodegradation process in a landfill (approximately one to 20 years, as opposed to hundreds of thousands of years) and the treated plastic is also recyclable. Treated plastic has an indefinite shelf life and looks and feels just like regular plastic until it reaches the landfill.

How does it work? EcoPure is added to packaging during the manufacturing process in concentrations of typically less than 1 percent; bottles and tubes are then filled with LATHER-branded or custom product. The EcoPure compound bonds to the molecular structure of plastic but does not alter the plastic's attributes. Treated packaging behaves just like untreated packaging in storage and in guestrooms—it isn't until the product finds its way into a landfill that it begins to biodegrade. The typical landfill provides an environment of rich microbial activity. Regular plastic, formulated for maximum shelf life, repels moisture and microbes and therefore can take hundreds to thousands of years to decompose. EcoPure-treated plastic attracts microbes, allowing the plastic to be metabolized into a non-toxic humus.

Why use biodegradable plastic?

Millions, if not billions, of amenity bottles end up in landfills every year in the United States alone, and only a tiny percentage are recycled. Recycling is best, but only about 24 percent of all types of plastic bottles (including water bottles, etc.)—and 7 percent of all plastic—are recycled at all. Should plastic end up in a landfill, EcoPure will accelerate biodegradation.

What kind of testing has been done? Independent, registered laboratories have extensively tested EcoPure-treated plastics following the Standard Test Methods set forth by the independent standards organization ASTM International. Based on the degradation observed in one of LATHER's treated polyethylene bottles during a 15-day test period, complete biodegradation is expected to occur within two to five years. EcoPure has also been extensively tested by other companies that use it in their plastic products and packaging.

As part of LATHER's environmental initiatives, many additional hospitality items, including shower caps and toothbrushes, will be made biodegradable with EcoPure. LATHER has also begun transition of its retail and spa products to biodegradable plastic.

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