

A Merry Christmas is a Whole Heap of Rubbish

(23.12.03) This Christmas period Irish Householders will generate enough packaging waste to cover Lansdowne rugby pitch 336 times or almost half the entire area of the Phoenix Park. On average each household consumes 16 bottles of wine, 50 beverage cans, 83 plastic bottles and 3 rolls of gift wrap, representing a 30% increase in used packaging generated from the consumer hungry Christmas period.

Nationwide, Irish householders will consume 20 million bottles of wine, 106 million plastic bottles, 64 million beverage cans and nearly 4 million rolls of wrapping paper over the Christmas period. If this used packaging was laid out to a depth of 10 centimetres, it would cover a region of approximately 306 hectares. In wine bottles alone this would stretch from Dublin to Miami (6,701 kilometres). We consumer enough beer and other drinks to fill over 100 Olympic sized swimming pools (using cans and plastic bottles, 317.5 million litres) and enough wrapping paper to completely cover half the size of Leinster (88km X 88km).

The figures were released today to mark the beginning of the Repak Green Christmas Campaign, which encourages householders to embrace the recycling habit by making it as easy as possible to recycle the increase in Christmas packaging waste. The nationwide network of 77 special Repak Green Christmas recycling centres is being organised in conjunction with 31 local authorities.

Andrew Hetherington, CEO of Repak said: "This is the Christmas hangover from a consumer driven society. Packaging waste generated by Irish Householders increases by 30% over the Christmas period. Luckily, this used packaging doesn't have to end up in Landfill sites because most of these materials are highly recyclable. The Repak Green Christmas initiative helps people to start recycling over the Christmas period and get into the habit of continuing to recycle in the New Year."

The 77 Repak Green Christmas centres will accept a wider range of materials than normal and will open for longer hours to make it as easy as possible to recycle. The initiative, supported by a nationwide awareness programme on TV, radio and print, aims to recycle 6,000 tonnes of the waste mountain of drinks cans, wine bottles, plastic bottles, cardboard and wrapping paper over the Christmas period. In addition, the existing network of almost 2,000 Bring Banks will help to facilitate the recycling of aluminium drink cans and glass bottles and jars.

The campaign, running from the 22nd December to the 10th January, will see 77 Green Christmas Recycling Centres set-up throughout the country, to which householders can bring the excess cardboard, paper, glass, plastic and cans generated over the Christmas period to be recycled. The Campaign is in its fourth year, having expanded from 11 participating Local Authorities in 2001 to nearly all local authorities in 2003. Full details of opening hours of the Green Christmas centres and materials handled are available at <http://www.repak.ie/>.

About Repak

Repak is a not-for-profit members based compliance scheme established under a voluntary agreement between industry and the Department of the Environment and Local Government. It was established as industry's response to the obligations placed on Ireland by the EU directive on Packaging Waste (94/62/EC) and is the only government approved compliance scheme under the

Waste Management (Packaging) Regulations 1997. Repak succeeded in reaching and exceeding Ireland's National Recycling Target of 25% of packaging waste in 2001.

Earlier this month Repak launched a school based, plastic bottle-recycling scheme, which will initially run through 14 schools in county Wicklow and aims to recycle 70,000 plastic bottles over the next school year. The organisation has also launched a TetraPak recycling initiative in Dublin, Cavan and Wicklow.