

Grocery Bags

While we are at the grocery working with the store manager, look around and you will see grocery bags with messages usually printed on the front and backside. Here's your next project.

There are different sizes of bags. Some are made of paper while others are plastic. Here are four paper sizes, ranging from large to small: 1 --17x12; 2--15x8 1/2; 3—12 1/2x6; and 4--the li'l fellow is 8-1/2 x 4-1/2. Your art space will not be required to be that large. If the store official says "yes," but only one bag, which one will you choose? The largest one is the most used.

Are you ready for water safety material on grocery bags? Here goes. Use the same approach as you did with sales papers, but remember with grocery bags you want as many boating safety messages as possible. If however, the manager will give you only one size bag, that's great. Take it, gladly.

One down side to grocery bags is timing. You will usually need months and months of lead-time, since they are printed by the convoy load. Simply back up your schedule accordingly. If you want to have them out during the summer, Thanksgiving might be a good time to visit the manager. Make sure to take the slicks with you. If possible, get one bag of each size to refer to. Work on one bag first. Then, if it lends itself, go for more. Each situation will be different, therefore, you must judge on the spot if it's a good or bad time to ask for other bags.

If another lake has already printed their water safety slicks on a grocery bag, take their bag with you as a sample. This is not an easy item to "sell" since most stores have already contracted with the bag producers and do not want to add additional expense to their cost. Their approach toward your idea might be "What's in it for me?"

How's this for an answer, or two? "A person who drowns on the lake sure can't shop here." Or, "Aren't you concerned about boating fatalities on the lake?" Or, "Boaters shop here, too." Or, "It's your duty to inform your shoppers ... and keep them

alive." Or, "What better way to show your true concern for the welfare of your customers, than having a water safety message on the side of your grocery bags?"

Timing is all-important and, this may sound morbid, but the best time to approach a store manager is immediately after a boating fatality on the lake. It is fresh in their minds and you will stand a much, much better chance of appealing to their good nature. Remember, you are not paying a cent for this service.

When you are ready to walk into the store and "lay it on the line," observe the manager's mood. If he or she is upset about something, come back another time. However, if the manager is happy, it's "show time" for you. If the store is not located near a lake or river it will be hard to convince the manager. Therefore, it is suggested you hone in on the lake/river area stores, first.

Let's say the official says "yes" for one bag, then "yes" on other bags. What's next? Color. If by chance the person will print the bags with colored ink, great. One store printed the message "Children Aren't Drown Proof" in red ink.

Okay, the manager has said "yes" and together you have selected which pieces of art will be printed on which bags. What's next? Exchange business cards. And, ask when the bags should arrive at the local store. Ask the manager to save you a dozen or so. Then wait. Jot the printing date on your calendar as a mind tickler to check on the bags. Also, during your normal rounds stop in a few weeks before the bags are due out, just as a reminder.

Before the bags arrive, check with the local newspaper reporter and ask if he or she will cover the arrival of the "first bag." As you know, it's soft news. Again, take a photo, even if the reporter shows up. Get the person who said "yes" in the photo.

Try your best to head in the store's direction, get your extra bags, and take some photos. Get a copy of all news clippings back

to the manager. Remember the District newsletter, outdoor and fishing magazines, too.

It is important to send sample bags into the District office, for a number of reasons. Most importantly is they may be able to share your success with others in the District, Division, or with State and Federal officials. This not the time to hide your success story under a basket.

Grocery bags are another contest idea. The resource manager might divide the lake into sections and assign different members of the lake staff to each section.

At the District, lakes could “battle” lakes, or river could “take on” river, for the grocery bag title.

Plastic bags. More and more stores are adding plastic bags. They are two-sides, also. If you can get the store manager to give you one side, that’s wonderful.

The employee-owned chain stores are usually the best to cooperate with you, and they are usually the easiest to help you spread out. Again, the local manager might help you obtain one more store to print your water safety slicks, or take a liking to the grocery bag idea and help you go chain-wide. Great. You’re on a roll now.

Then, if the chain is across District boundaries call the District office and tell them the good news. They will send the information to Division. If the bags are going outside the Division, the Division office will inform the respective office. If it’s going nationwide, USACE will most definitely need to know.

Helping members of the Corps of Engineers family is important, too. Saving lives has no boundaries!

Is it grocery bag shopping time? See ya at the store. Good luck.