

LONDON 2012

SCA Cool Logistics and Notbox win the race for the next generation of 'green' packaging solutions

With a global TV audience of four billion people for the opening ceremony alone, maintaining the health of athletes participating in the London 2012 Olympic Games is paramount.

Maintaining the integrity of the 19-day competition remains the priority for the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the London 2012 Organising Committee (LOCOG) and this includes the implementation of a strict anti-doping policy. During the Games, over 6,000 anonymous urine and blood samples will be taken from approximately half of the athletes taking part in events in London and across the UK.

Samples will be tested at a World Anti-Doping Agency accredited laboratory in Harlow, Essex, provided by pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline. Each sample will be tested for 60 prohibited substances by leading anti-doping experts from King's College London who will be supported by scientists from around the world. In total, over 1,000 LOCOG staff will work within the anti-doping process and a team of more than 150 anti-doping scientists will carry out the testing at the laboratory.

Sustainability also lies at the heart of the London 2012 commitment and the need for a 'Green' Games is being supported by a whole series of initiatives both at the giant Olympic site in London and among businesses playing a key supporting role in the overall success of the 2012 event.

So when UPS, Official Logistics and Express Delivery Supporter of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games challenged global temperature control packaging specialists SCA Cool Logistics to find the best solution to transport anti-doping samples to the laboratory in Essex, it was clear that only a smart, green solution would suffice. Through a process of elimination involving traditional packaging options, SCA Cool Logistics' research led them to Notbox.

Richard Wood, Design Manager at SCA Cool Logistics, said: "We had a variety of requirements. Firstly, although the large majority of anti-doping samples are urine and therefore not temperature sensitive, we needed a solution for blood samples that would meet strict criteria. The packaging needed to protect the integrity of the sample for at least six hours within a 2-12°C temperature range when exposed to ambient temperatures expected during the games.

"UPS had a clear wish-list for packaging that immediately ruled out standard traditional insulated boxes that use traditional insulative packaging materials. They wanted a solution that was easy to store and so not bulky. It had to be small, light, suitable for flat packing and yet still perform to the strict standards of the anti-doping laboratory."

Research into new, innovative packaging solutions led the SCA Cool Logistics team to Notbox, a replacement for the traditional 'one use' cardboard box in the global supply chain. Already the Notbox team had identified over 100 uses for their 'green' packing solution that also included commercial and domestic applications as well as to support marketing solutions but the tie-up with SCA Cool Logistics was to open up a whole new market segment in temperature control packaging.

In-house tests in SCA Cool Logistics' own laboratories quickly established that Notbox could meet and, in fact, easily exceed the temperature and timescale parameters required for the Olympic project. The other big plus was the environmental credentials offered by Notbox.

"Our range of Notboxes are designed for multiple use and have an average lifespan of three years. As a 'green' solution 80 multi-trip Notboxes are the equivalent in terms of carbon footprint to 1,200 'one-trip' cardboard boxes. They are also stronger than cardboard boxes having been compression tested up to 35 kilos without bowing or breaking and, when not in use, can be folded down flat to just 4cms deep and so easy to move within a supply chain," added Jonathan Cobb, Managing Director of Notbox.

In the supply chain, up to now the cardboard box has been a 'protected species' due to the lack of a suitable replacement but the launch of Notbox and its potential to support eco-policies and cost saving will see its implementation by retailers, manufacturers and logistics providers.

Jonathan Cobb said: "It is staggering to consider that the largest container ship in the world can carry 15,000 ocean containers and in each one of those there could be as many as 400 cardboard boxes. That means one vessel alone could be carrying as many as six million boxes every time it sets sail. For us, the potential is simply mind-blowing and through our partnership with SCA Cool Logistics will now take us into a further market for temperature control logistics. SCA Cool Logistics have specialist knowledge of their market segment and the solution we have jointly developed for UPS reflects how well we can work together. We are now exploring the potential for many more tailored applications."

During London 2012, UPS, SCA and Notbox will enable the anti-doping laboratory to test 400 samples a day and achieve the 24-hour turnaround time for negative results required by the IOC.