

RECYCLING NEWS BULLETIN

July 2018



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China notified the World Trade Organization a year ago of its intent to ban the import of 24 materials, including mixed waste paper and mixed plastics. While the news was met with skepticism at the time, over the past year China followed through with the ban, and the Chinese government implemented additional restrictions including announcing a **ban on all recyclables by 2020**.

What are the effects of China's policy changes? Impacted by basic supply and demand economic principles, recycling commodity markets plummeted due to the global over-supply of recyclables and simultaneous reduced demand, driven by China's restrictive import policies. These policies are creating challenges for recyclers and cities:

- China's 0.5% contamination limit elevated quality expectations for all buyers across the globe. It also increased recycling processing costs in Material Recovery Facilities (MRF's) as recyclers work to remove non-acceptable items.
- Recyclers have a hard time selling paper and plastics and many are carrying large inventories.
- MRF residual rates continue to increase due to the amount of non-recyclable materials from curbside programs.
- In short, these factors contribute to increasing the cost of community recycling programs.

What can we do to adapt to the new reality and norms of recycling?

Keep recycling the right things! A quote in a [recent article](#) notes that we should "keep calm and recycle." Recycling will survive this crisis. It will evolve and may look different in a few years, but recycling will continue.

The best thing we can all do is to evaluate and adapt our programs for today's environment:

- **Review your acceptable items list.** Does it include only those materials with viable recycling end markets? Are you emphasizing the three rules of Recycle Often. Recycle Right.®? Are you focusing on recycling all your empty plastic bottles, aluminum cans, paper and cardboard?
- **Review informative recycling education materials to recycle right.** Visit [Recycle Often. Recycle Right.com](#) to see all the recycling education resources for residents, businesses, municipalities, multi-family complexes and more.
- **Actively discuss the current state of recycling and consider adjusting recycling contracts.** New contract language needs to mitigate the risk associated with recycling services and the role of the global commodity market.

Recycling has weathered difficult times before. Although this situation is different since it stems from Chinese policy changes changing global market dynamics rather than economic supply and demand trends, we expect markets will eventually recover, albeit, the industry will likely look very different. Now more than ever it is imperative to collect materials with long-term market viability: cardboard, paper, aluminum, tin and plastic bottles (water/soda bottles and milk/juice jugs).

Join us in the battle against recycling contamination. It takes all of us working together to educate consumers to the new realities of recycling.

- **Become a Recycling Ambassador.** Share good recycling practices with Waste Management's education and outreach program, [Recycle Often. Recycle Right.](#)® Download educational materials that help consumers and businesses **reduce and eliminate contamination**.
- **Don't bag your recyclables!** We need to help consumers change their behavior and place their recyclable materials directly into their containers – no plastic bags! It's safer for workers and better for the environment.
- **Collaborate: Let's work together to make recycling work** to adjust the current recycling business model to reflect today's marketplace.

Resources for Recycling Industry News

[Recycle Often. Recycle Right.® Newsroom](#)

[WasteDive](#)

[Waste360](#)

[Resource Recycling](#)

[Waste Today](#)



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