

POSITION PAPER



NWRA Opposes China's Ban on Recyclables

September 2017

Background

On July 18, 2017, the Chinese government notified the World Trade Organization of their plans to ban 24 “solid waste” materials by the end of 2017. These materials include various types of plastic and unsorted paper. According to the Chinese, the ban is being enacted to protect its environment and reduce pollution resulting from managing these materials.

The National Waste and Recycling Association (NWRA) supports the efforts of the Chinese Government to improve environmental protection and standards within its recycling infrastructure. However, the decision to ban the import of recyclable materials would have a significant impact on the waste and recycling industry. Not only will the ban impact the recycling industry in the U.S., but also the Chinese manufacturing industry that relies on those materials.

Amount of Materials Exported to China

Although the ban notification has identified a number of different materials, there is still confusion about which products will be impacted. At this point, mixed paper and post-consumer plastics appear to be included in the ban. In the U.S., a significant amount of those materials are exported to China.

In 2016, approximately 41% of paper recovered in the North America was exported with about a quarter of recyclable paper exported to Chinese mills. Similarly, over 20% of post consumer bottles and 33% of non bottle rigid plastics from the U.S. were exported in 2015.

Impact of this Ban

With the amount of recyclables currently transported to China, the ability of the American markets to absorb the banned materials would be strained. At a minimum, this is anticipated to affect the costs of these materials. However, it could result in the lack of markets for some of the materials altogether forcing material to be landfilled.

The U.S. recycling industry relies on the mostly volunteer efforts of the public to separate their recyclables from their waste. Should banned materials end up landfilled, the public confidence could be shaken creating long term consequences in material quality and segregation efforts.

What NWRA is Doing

NWRA has been working with its members and other associations to raise awareness within both the U.S. and Chinese governments. We have encouraged the Chinese government to reconsider the implementation and discuss using strict international standards to control the quality of recyclable materials rather than pursue an outright ban of these materials.

Who We Are

NWRA is a not-for-profit trade association representing private-sector solid waste and recycling collection, processing and management companies.

“The U.S. recycling industry relies mostly on volunteer efforts of the public to separate their recyclables from their waste. Should banned materials end of being landfilled, the public confidence could be shaken creating long term consequences in material quality and segregation efforts.”

CONTACT US



@wasterecycling

wasterecycling.org • 202-244-4700 • info@wasterecycling.org
1550 Crystal Drive, Suite 804 Arlington, VA 22202