

# Recycling Quality Control - The Battle Against Contamination

Collaborating & educating to keep recycling sustainable

**THINK GREEN.<sup>®</sup>**

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## Biography

### Troy Hanson - Market Area General Manager, WI/MN Area

- 14 years with Waste Management
  - ✓ INK area, WI/MN area, MI/OH/IN area & Corporate
  - ✓ Recycling Operations
  - ✓ Collection & Transfer Operations
  - ✓ Sales & Marketing
- 11 years with Pepsi-Cola (Sales, Business Development & Operations experience)
- B.S. - Upper Iowa University

What has changed in our world?

# Global Market Changes Are Impacting Recycling



2017: Over 25% of world's recyclables were imported by China, including >50% of paper & plastics



China's new import policies banning materials & limiting contamination have global impacts on recycling programs in communities across US



Operation Blue Sky = screening effort at China's ports to inspect loads, enforce material bans & 0.5% contamination limit



Situation not likely to improve - China appears to be on path to eliminate imports of all post-consumer recyclables by 2021



The reduction of China's markets resulted in oversupply of commodities & depressed commodity pricing. Supply is high & commodity pricing is very low



## China's War on Pollution Will Change the World

By Jeff Koenig, Hannah Devore and Alyssa McDonald

China is cracking down on pollution and extensive they can be felt as demand to commodities market

Four decades of breakneck economic growth. But now the government and perhaps even its green lawmakers are taking aim at the annual N



## Whose responsibility is it to make recycling work?

### 6 Things You're Recycling Wrong

Can you recycle coffee cups or greasy pizza boxes? If you're tossing things in the recycling bin out of sheer hope, you might be an "aspirational recycler."



By Livia Albeck-Ripka

May 29, 2018

阅读简体中文版 阅读繁体中文版

program coordinators, nonprofits and  
changes in commodity markets, some have

### Ecomaine warns public it may start paying a price for sloppy recycling

presherald.com/2018/05/04/ecomaine-warns-public-it-may-start-paying-a-price-for-sloppy-recycling/

By Peter McGuire

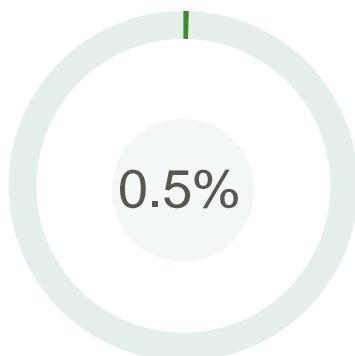
May 4, 2018



# The Evolution of Recycling



1 in 4 items placed in a recycling cart is not recyclable!



% Contamination  
Enforced by China

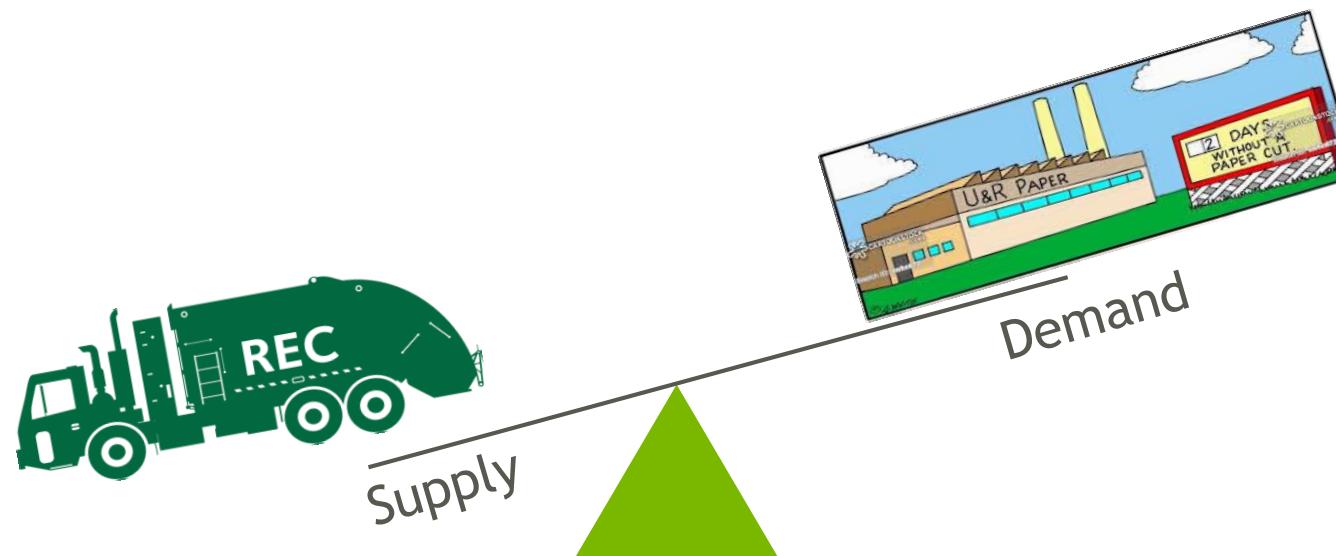


National Avg.  
Contamination %,  
Customer Contamination

- Introduced Single Stream recycling - it is simple & convenient. The focus was on increasing volume & participation
- We worked together to educate residents & businesses about the importance of recycling to raise diversion rates - “recycle often”
- Our current focus is on **“recycling right”** as global markets changed.
- What hasn’t changed:
  - People still want to recycle & do the right thing
  - Recycling is still an effective way to reduce pollution and conserve natural resources
  - States & local government have established recycling bans, goals & mandates
- What has changed:
  - Markets for Mixed Paper and Plastics are limited
  - Quality requirements are strict
  - Operating costs have increased
  - Recycling to provide feedstock for new products has devolved to aspirational, “wish-cycling”

# Recycling Supply and Demand

- Recycling programs have a fundamental economic supply/demand problem
- Even though demand has significantly declined, inelastic supply continues to flow in at high rates
- With inelastic supply and limited international demand, domestic markets are at full capacity



The “Right Thing” must be reframed - not all materials can be recycled

What does this mean for recycling?

# It's time to re-write the recycling playbook

- It is time to rethink/reset recycling programs.
- Which materials offer the best bang for the buck?
- As the cost of recycling increases, should we be looking more closely at the benefits of waste reduction?
- This is the new normal for recycling, we all need to acknowledge that fact and educate the public about the true cost of recycling
- Environmental benefits are our goal

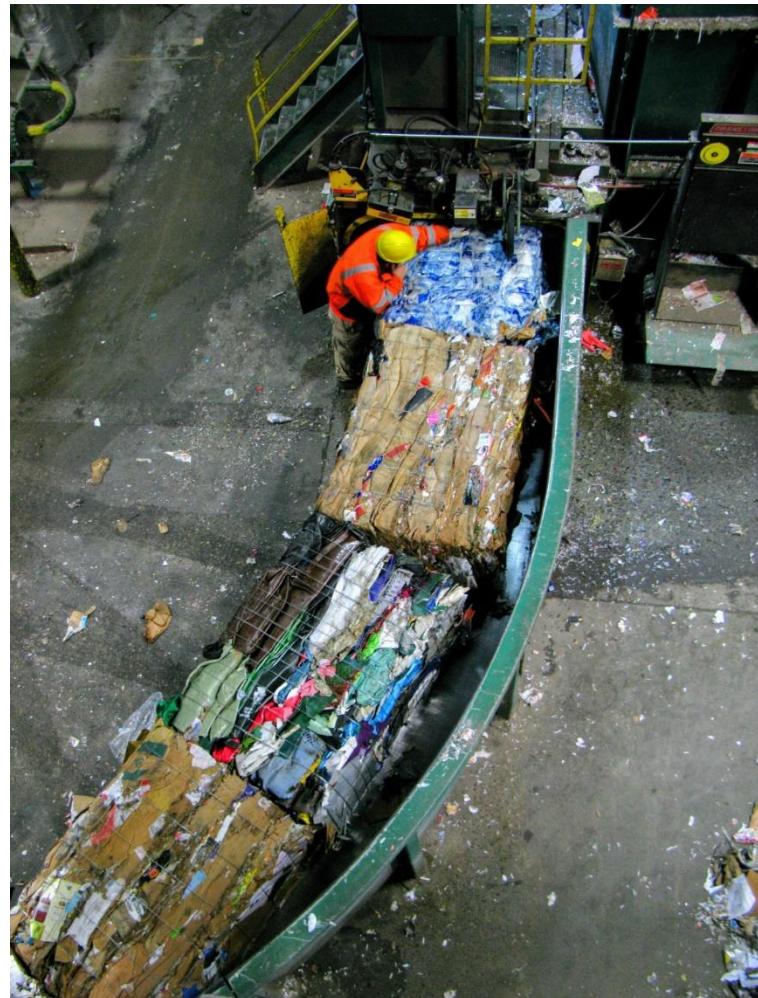


**WHY do we recycle and WHAT should we recycle?**

# Remember why we recycle

Start with the basics:

- Recycling conserves resources by creating secondary feedstocks for industry
- Conserving virgin resources makes recycling environmentally good thing to do
- Recycling makes business sense



# Collection is not recycling



- Recycling doesn't happen until a material displaces virgin resources
- Unless materials becomes a feedstock for a new product, it increases cost and environmental burden.

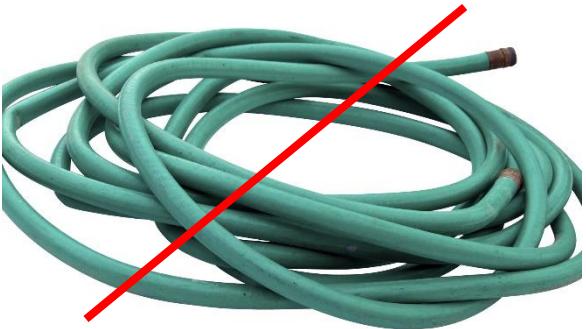
# The Battle Against Contamination?

# One Bad Apple Can Spoil the Bunch

And the same is true for recycling, where one non-recyclable item can spoil an entire batch of otherwise good materials



Polystyrene foam and plastic “to-go” containers and cups cannot be collected curbside.



Tanglers like hoses, cords, and holiday lights wrap around equipment and shut down entire recycling centers!



Soiled and wet paper should be placed in the trash.



Flexible packaging like chip bags and juice or soup pouches cannot be recycled in curbside programs.



Food scraps and liquids may seem harmless, but they could turn a whole load of recycling to trash.



Items like textiles and clothing don't belong in the recycling. Check local take back programs.

# Think Outside the Plastic Bag

One of the biggest culprits of contamination is plastic bags

Plastic bags and bagged recyclables are NOT recyclable in curbside and business recycling containers!

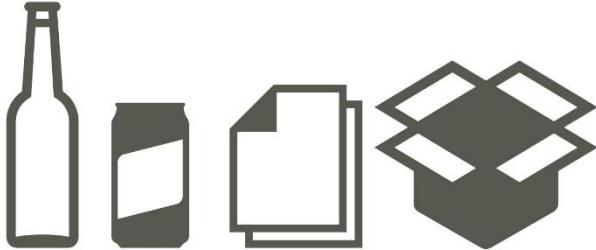
- Plastic bags pose a huge safety threat to our employees. They wrap around screens, clog up equipment and shut down the system. Staff must stop work multiple times each day to carefully climb into machinery and cut plastic bags out of gears and screens.
- Materials must be clean and dry to be recycled. Plastic bags pick up dirt and moisture in your containers and in trucks. By the time they get to the recycling facility - even a bag that was clean to start with is too dirty and wet to be recycled. There is simply NO market for wet, dirty plastic film and bags, so they end up in the trash.



# What Can We Do?

Commit to getting back to the basics of good recycling

1



**Recycle all empty bottles, cans, paper and cardboard.**

2



**Keep food and liquids out of the recycling.**

3



**Keep plastic bags out of the recycling bin.**

**NO BAGGED RECYCLABLES.**

Visit [RecycleOftenRecycleRight.com](http://RecycleOftenRecycleRight.com) to download free tools and learn more about recycling right, including the ‘Free Your Recyclables’ and ‘Think Outside the Plastic Bag’ campaign materials (coming soon).

# Free Your Recyclables



Don't bag your recyclables! We need to help individuals change their behavior and place recyclable materials directly into containers - no plastic bags! It's safer for workers and better for the environment.



Reduce and reuse: Avoid plastic bags all together by taking reusable bags with you the next time you go shopping. Save leftover plastic bags to use as trash liners (never recycling) around your home.



Recycle clean and dry plastic bags at local retailers. The bags that are collected in these programs are kept separate so they stay clean and dry. Visit [plasticfilmrecycling.org](http://plasticfilmrecycling.org) to find a take back location near you.



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



What we are doing and how can you help?



# How can “we” change consumer behaviors?

- Collectively we need to educate consumers on the “new normal” for recycling

- WM actions:

- ✓ RORR - commit to getting back to the basics of recycling
    - ✓ Continuous customer reminders via written and verbal messaging
    - ✓ Battle Against Contamination - grading of material
    - ✓ Getting the message out through media, stakeholder groups and customer conversations

- How you can help?

- ✓ Emphasis the fact that recycling has a “new normal” with all stakeholders
    - ✓ Educate, educate, educate, we appreciate your support



Thank you!