



MATERIALS COLLECTION POLICY

Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Virginia Recycling Association (VRA) to support the collection and sorting of recyclable materials in a manner that provides optimal value and utilization of the material as a marketable commodity and as feedstock for the manufacture of new products.

Reason for Policy

The purpose of the Materials Collection Policy is to promote and support pre-sorting of recyclable materials prior to collection to ensure that valuable, marketable recyclable materials are not contaminated unnecessarily by other items.

The National Waste and Recycling Association states that approximately twenty-five percent (25%) of what goes into the recycling bin cannot be recycledⁱ.

Who is/will be affected

Members, Public, Government, Suppliers, Manufacturers, Recycling and Solid Waste Industries

Supporting Information

There are three types of collection systems in place for trash and recycling:

- **Source separated** – consumer separate materials by type at the point of discard so they can be recycled.
- **Single Stream** – consumer place all of their recyclable materials in one bin, separate from their trash container
- **All in One** - consumer places all trash and recyclables in one bin with no separation.

The most common collection system used is single stream, which started in California in 1995ⁱⁱ. Single stream collection is not without fault, and approximately twenty five percent (25%) of the material put in the recycling bin is comprised of solid wastes including liquids, food waste, clothing, chemicals, and other “wishful recycling” items that decrease the quality of the recyclables reducing their value.

In July of 2017, the high percentage of contamination in recyclable materials, received from the United States, prompted China to impose a ban on those imports. This action caused a monumental upheaval in the recycling industry and a high level of public interest in the continued viability of recycling collection and processing. The industry responded with a call for public re-education regarding recycling practices focusing on the reduction of recycling contamination.

One of the outcomes of the “China Ban” was the need for the industry to explain the value of recyclable material as a commodity and as a significant contributor to the US economy. The Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI)ⁱⁱⁱ website has produced accurate and timely information on the value of these commodities through the following resources:

- ISRI Scrap Specifications Circular
- Recycling Industry Yearbook
- What is the Economic Impact in your area? (interactive page)

Definitions

Recyclable Material

Raw or processed material that can be recovered from a waste stream and converted into new materials.

Solid Waste

Solid waste also called Municipal Solid Waste is unwanted items that are discarded because they have served their purpose and no longer useful.

Recycling Contamination

Refers to the process of rendering a recyclable material unfit for use. of nonconforming materials. This occurs when incorrect items or materials are put into the collection system or when the right items are prepared incorrectly

Feedstock

Refers to the use of recyclable materials as a source for the development of new materials. This would include chemical and industrial processing that breaks down the recyclable material through liquefaction, smelting, crushing, and shredding.

Specification Grade Commodity

Refers to the range of purity or quality of the deliverable material. Grades are really critical in case of scrap commodities such as paper, plastic, metals, textiles, and glass.

ⁱ Wright, B. (2018, November 15). NWRA Celebrates America Recycles Day. Retrieved from [https://wasterecycling.org/news/news.asp?id=426888&hhSearchTerms="contamination"](https://wasterecycling.org/news/news.asp?id=426888&hhSearchTerms=)

ⁱⁱ Goodyear, S. A Brief History of Household Recycling. Retrieved from <https://www.citylab.com/city-makers-connections/recycling/#slide-1995>

ⁱⁱⁱ Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI). Retrieved from <https://www.isri.org/>