



## China National Sword Fact Sheet

- **February 2017:** China announces National Sword policy
- **July 18, 2017:** China files intent to ban certain recyclables with World Trade Organization
- **September 2017:** Initial impacts of import restrictions reach curbside programs and MRFs
- **December 2017:** China issues limited import permits for 2018
- **January 2018:** China's ban on 24 types of solid waste and recyclables take effect
- **March 2018:** *0.5 percent* contamination limit takes effect
- **March 2018:** Blue Sky 2018 announced
- **April 2018:** China announces 16 additional materials prohibited by end of the year and another 16 types by end of 2019
- **May 2018:** China suspends CCIC North America for one month.
- **June-July 2018:** Southeast Asian countries raise quality standards or ban imports
- **July 2018:** China declares intent for full recyclable import ban by 2020
- **August 2018:** China imposes 25-50% tariffs on recyclables

### Background

China, historically the largest recyclable scrap importer in the world, has made it clear that they want to improve their environment by increasing the recycling of domestic recyclable materials. China began implementing policies, collectively known as National Sword, that restrict the importation of foreign recyclables with the intent to fully ban all recyclables by 2020. China implemented these policies to encourage job growth in the recycling sector as well as reduce environmental impacts through the promotion of in-country waste management.

### Impact on International Markets

Significant increase in scrap imports to Southeast Asian countries. Without the inspection or processing capacity to meet the huge flow of materials diverted to their ports, countries like Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia have begun to enact bans and inspection standards similar to those in China.

#### May 2018

- Several Vietnamese ports imposed temporary bans on scrap plastic in order to deal with stockpiled materials and announced new requirements for recovered fiber imports.
- Indonesia now requires 100 percent inspection of scrap paper and plastic imports.

#### June 2018

- Thailand announces an indefinite ban on scrap plastic and electronic imports.

#### July 2018

- Malaysia stops issuing scrap plastic import permits for three months.

#### August 2018

- Vietnam stops issuing new scrap plastic import licenses.
- Thailand passes resolution that will ban scrap plastic imports within two years.

### California Impacts

1/3 of CA's recyclable material is exported; most material is mixed paper and mixed plastic that was being sent to China.

- Stockpiling of material in some facilities and in some cases landfilling of excess material due to fire and health code issues
- Declining markets for recyclables.

### Local Responses

#### Markets

- San Jose is renegotiating its contracts with solid waste haulers.
- San Diego's hauler requests suspension of all revenue payments and charge for materials received from the city instead.
- Grass Valley City Council approved an annual rate increase for garbage collection service.
- City of Fremont increasing residential garbage bills by \$1.50 a month to cover additional sorting and processing costs

**Processing**

- Five cities serviced by Mill Valley Refuse are participating in an alternating weeks dual-stream recycling pilot program. Mixed paper and cardboard is picked up one week and all other mixed recyclables are picked up the next week.
- Bakersfield is composting mixed paper from recycling bin.
- Republic Services adjusted processing speeds to improve quality of sorted material; some facilities unable to handle daily volume.
- Evaluate need to dispose of excess material that has deteriorated beyond point of commercial value or poses safety risks.

**Policy**

- The City of Sacramento will no longer accept plastics 4-7, shredded paper, and plastic foam.
- Monterey County Regional Waste Management stopped accepting plastic bags for recycling on August 1, 2018.

**Waste Reduction**

- Nine California cities have banned plastic straws completely or by request only.
- California State Legislature AB 1884 limits single-use plastic straws to by request only.

**How to Take Action**

Encourage waste reduction at all levels and emphasize reduce and reuse mentality. Increase public education efforts for proper recycling to reduce contamination. Communicate with elected officials, industry partners, generators, and other parties about the current disruption in recycling markets.

**Waste Prevention**

- Banning single-use plastics.
- Banning polystyrene and other non-recyclable plastic food packaging.
- Installing water systems to encourage reusable beverage containers.
- Promoting reuse or repurposing of materials through incentives or other programs.
- Procuring products that use less packaging.

**Collection and Contamination**

It is critical to educate businesses and residents regarding the need to generate high-quality recyclable material.

- Consulting with haulers and processing facilities to confirm what materials are recyclable and acceptable through collection programs.
- Providing new/updated educational material. To reduce contamination, flyers will be more specific as to what materials residents and businesses can place in recycling containers, instead of telling them, "When in doubt, recycle."
- Educating collection drivers to recognize contamination and investing in on-board cameras to assist with identification.
- Implementing or increasing "tagging" or notification for customers regarding unwanted materials in recycling receptacles.
- Establishing a penalty process on generators for contamination to encourage proper material management.
- Establishing single-commodity collection programs when and where appropriate; e.g., white paper for office buildings, separate food waste collection to reduce paper contamination, and color-sorted glass at a restaurant.
- Applying a variable container rate system that matches recycling containers to amounts generated so residents and businesses do not place excess garbage in a recycling cart.

**Processing**

Implementing new practices or modifying existing procedures to improve the processing of materials after they are collected will also create higher quality recyclable materials.

- Increasing the processing of recyclables to remove contaminants. This can be in the form of slowing down the sorting lines at the material recovery facility, hiring more sorters, running recyclables across the sorting lines more than one time, and so on.
- Breaking apart and examining finished bales to determine which materials were inappropriately included in the bales to prompt calibration of sorting equipment and education for line sorters.
- Reducing what material types are recycled through collection programs.
- Working with local enforcement officials to allow safe stockpiling of materials until facility operators can find new markets, which can reduce landfilling of recyclable materials.
- Sorting higher value materials multiple times.