



Keeping an Eye on the National Sword

Below you'll find an excerpt from the October 2017 issue of "Chasing Arrows", our newsletter for municipal officials

You'd be hard pressed to open an [industry publication](#) these days without reading about China's change to import policies. These new quality rules, commonly referred to as the "National Sword," are intended to curb the amount of contamination China receives in recycling shipments by banning the import of certain materials—mainly mixed paper and mixed plastics.

The National Sword is set to go in effect at the start of 2018, but its impacts are starting to be seen across the country. It is still unclear how stringent China will be in enforcing these new standards, and how long they will be in place. China is by far the largest importer of recyclables in the world, with the United States shipping over ten million tons annually. Historically, they have been reliant on imports of these materials to fuel their manufacturing processes, and the demand for them will eventually surpass their supply. In the meantime, MRFs around the country will be competing in markets outside of China. Now, more than ever, quality recycling matters.

The good news is that Rhode Island is ahead of the curve in our preparedness for this and other market fluctuations. Our push to improve the quality of materials we receive through our "Let's Recycle Right!" public education campaign, coupled with our responsive adjustments to sorting processes in the MRF have resulted in uninterrupted movement of our materials to date, while other MRFs in the country are already feeling the squeeze. Markets may further tighten of course, at least temporarily, as we come into 2018. Quality is key to keeping the material moving.

So, what should *you* be doing? First and foremost, don't panic. Market volatility is a normal part of the recycling process and we're in a good position to handle it. We are not making any changes to the mixed recycling program. Secondly, please don't panic your residents. Instead, focus on quality by continuing to promote and support our "[Lets Recycle Right!](#)" campaign. The clear call to action—recycle everything that is accepted in RI's mixed recycling program, *but nothing more*—will help your residents produce quality recycling that remains competitive in the global market. Any and all efforts you can make to reinforce good recycling habits at the curb will further help. You can point residents to bilingual basic mixed recycling guidelines for view/download at www.recycletogetheri.org and matching how-to videos at www.youtube.com/rirrc.

We will continue to monitor the situation and share updates with you as they are made available. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact Marcel Lussier, our MRF Materials Coordinator, at mlussier@rirrc.org or 401-228-3128.

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