ReMA 2025 Advocacy Agenda

Recycled Materials Association
Sustainable. Resilient. Essential.

Approved by the ReMA Board on
July 17, 2025

Introduction

Recycled materials make our lives better by strengthening the manufacturing supply chain, growing the national economy, and providing the raw material to create our everyday necessities and essential infrastructure.

The Recycled Materials Association (ReMA) represents more than 1,700 companies in the U.S. and around the globe who play an essential role providing a renewable resource of high-quality materials necessary for the manufacturing sector. Based in Washington, D.C., we promote safe, economically sustainable, and environmentally responsible recycling through education, networking, and proactive advocacy.

Together, ReMA's members recycle metals, paper, plastics, glass, textiles, tire & rubber, and electronics. In doing so, our members supply high-quality, renewable resources for everything from essential national infrastructure, like bridges and buildings, to consumer products like laptops, soda cans, boxes, and cars. It's impossible to go a day—or even an hour—without using a product made in part with recycled material. With a commitment to innovation and growth, the industry is continually finding new ways to increase efficiency, improving how we provide critical materials while fostering an environmentally sustainable, economically resilient future.

In the face of a dynamic and evolving political landscape, shifting policies, and increased focus on state and local activity, ReMA continues to position its members and the industry to succeed. As the voice of the recycled materials industry, ReMA works hand-in-hand with member companies, industry leaders, and other stakeholders to help shape impactful policy outcomes, ensuring the recycled materials industry is both heard and respected. In leading these efforts, ReMA is committed to not only working alongside those in the industry, but also to building strong coalitions and partnering with allied associations, non-profits, business groups and community leaders to amplify our voice and maximize our impact. To ensure the industry is equipped to capitalize on and adjust to the evolving political environment, the Association has updated its Advocacy Agenda.

While policies and political environments may change, our commitment remains the same: advancing public policy that fosters safe, economically sustainable, and environmentally responsible recycling.

Market Access and Economic Growth

The recycled materials industry is a vital component of the American economy and industrial supply chains, recycling nearly 140 million metric tons of materials each year that would otherwise be discarded, generating around $170 billion in annual economic impact, and supporting nearly 600,000 well-paying American jobs.

Not only is the industry a domestic powerhouse; we are also the largest single exporter of recycled materials to the global marketplace, with nearly a third of recycled materials processed in the U.S. exported internationally each year. These exports help to reduce the U.S. trade deficit by more than $20 billion each year. ReMA recyclers' ability to meet domestic needs and export materials to the global market is vital to the industry's integral, but underappreciated role in strengthening global manufacturing supply chains. To maintain and enhance the role of recycled materials, ReMA focuses on several strategic areas, serving as a leader on product stewardship policies, domestic and international market access, and more.

Maintain Global Market Access and Oppose Restrictive Trade Measures

In a world that is increasingly interconnected, it is essential to advocate for trade policies that ensure continued access for recycled materials in the global marketplace. Exports of recycled materials contribute to American prosperity by supporting American industrial prowess and keeping the engine of American manufacturing running. Efforts to restrict exports would distort markets for recycled materials and damage existing robust supply chains, ultimately harming the U.S. economy. Relatedly, some governments have recently attempted to limit trade in recycled materials over confusion between 'what is product' and 'what is waste' amidst rising protectionism. These policies are often enacted in the name of environmentalism but can hinder environmental sustainability by reducing the industry's ability to operate. The broad application of tariffs and restrictions on the flow of recycled materials, including through import tariffs or export control measures, can also have unintended negative consequences. ReMA will continue to align with like-minded organizations, associations, and other relevant stakeholders to address these challenges. Together, we will work to provide ongoing education to policymakers about the necessity of reliable market access.

Promote Recycling as an Essential Cornerstone of Supply Chain Resilience

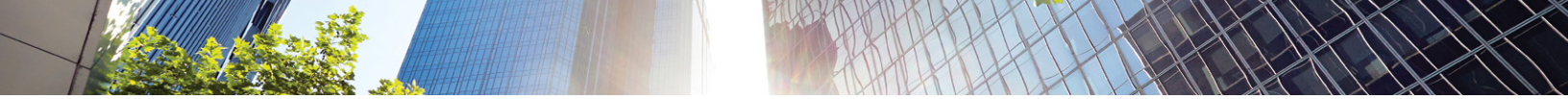
Recycled materials are fundamental to a stable, diversified, and resilient supply chain, reducing reliance on finite resources and mitigating the risk of geopolitical instability and other unanticipated disruptions. U.S. manufacturing sectors support critical infrastructure, including energy, water, transportation, and healthcare, and are dependent on a consistent supply of recycled raw materials for their operational needs. This reliance is evident across all commodities—over 70% of domestically produced steel is made from recycled steel; more than 75% of U.S. paper mills rely on recycled fiber for daily production needs; over half of all aluminum used by domestic manufacturers is sourced from recycled metal; and recycled copper accounts for over one-third of all copper, brass, and bronze produced in the U.S. ReMA will continue to advocate for policies that formally recognize recycled materials as essential to U.S. manufacturing, supply chain resiliency, and the nation's broader economic and national security.

Support Practical, Market-Driven Solutions for Complex Materials

As the complexity of recyclable materials grows, the industry recognizes the need for policy efforts to address hazardous and other difficult to recycle products, ensuring the existing recycling ecosystem is protected. While the industry favors market-driven solutions such as manufacturer incentives to promote recyclability of products, we also acknowledge that certain materials, such as batteries and certain packaging types, may require targeted policy responses. ReMA's priority is to ensure that product stewardship frameworks, including Extended Producer Responsibility, are practical, industry-informed, and avoid unintended negative consequences for recyclers. ReMA will continue to educate and advise policymakers to promote workable solutions that align with recycling system realities, and acknowledgment of existing material flows.

Support Freight Network Modernization and Transportation Infrastructure Investments

A reliable and efficient freight transportation network is critical to the recycled materials industry, which relies on multimodal infrastructure—rail, truck, barge, and port access—to collect, process, and deliver essential materials to manufacturers. ReMA urges policymakers to prioritize investments which modernize this critical infrastructure and expand competitive transport options to ensure the uninterrupted flow of recycled commodities. This includes reforming outdated policies which limit access to Surface Transportation Board remedies to ensure the industry isn't unfairly charged for disruptions caused by common carriers and modernizing the infrastructure essential for moving these critical materials.



Reasonable and Fair Environmental Frameworks

The recycled materials industry plays a crucial role in supporting environmental stewardship, returning more than 140 million tons of specification-grade recycled materials back into productive use each year. This reduces dependence on primary material production and avoids its subsequent energy consumption and environmental impacts. Despite this, the industry is increasingly burdened by a fragmented and shifting landscape of federal, state, and local environmental regulations, particularly in the air and water sectors. Environmental protection remains a shared priority, and the recycled materials industry is steadfast in our commitment to delivering measurable, scientifically proven environmental and economic benefits. However, overly prescriptive or misaligned policies can undermine this crucial work.

Additionally, we remain committed to global frameworks that ensure recyclable materials are traded in an environmentally responsible manner, but it is crucial that these international fora acknowledge the materials processed by recyclers are not waste. ReMA supports environmental frameworks that are risk-based, scientifically sound, and operationally practical. The industry is committed to meaningful collaboration with policymakers to ensure regulations that support, rather than hinder, the industry's contributions to American manufacturing and environmental sustainability. To ensure this balance is achieved, ReMA will continue to advocate for the following:

Simplify Complex Permitting and Zoning Processes

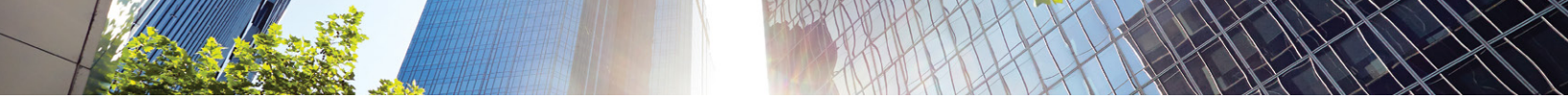
Recyclers are responsible community members, committed to environmental stewardship and the sustainable management of resources. At the same time, permitting and zoning processes have become increasingly intricate, driven by more stringent environmental regulations and integration of environmental justice principles. ReMA will advocate to ensure that efforts to revise such frameworks give all stakeholders a meaningful voice, and that any changes to permitting processes distinguish between true polluters and those who reduce waste, contribute to lower overall emissions, and support local jobs.

Oppose Mischaracterization of Automobile Shredder Residue as Hazardous Waste

Over 12 million vehicles are recycled annually in the U.S., making them one of the most recycled consumer products. Due to the innovation of the industry, the dismantling and shredding of ELVs can recover a significant amount of material, with only 10–20% of the total vehicle weight remaining as Automobile Shredder Residue (ASR). ASR, a byproduct of automotive recycling, is often used as daily cover at landfills, reducing the need for other fill, and providing a valuable resource for metal and plastic recovery as technologies mature. Efforts that misclassify ASR as hazardous waste risk jeopardizing recycling operations, increasing costs on an already capital-intensive industry, and potentially reducing the ability of the industry to recover valuable materials from vehicles that are ready to be recycled. ReMA will advocate to ensure that a risk-based, evidence-driven classification of ASR is maintained to ensure responsible recycling.

Champion Uniform Definitions for Recycling

Innovation is a constant in the recycled materials industry, and ReMA strongly supports public and private efforts aimed at developing new recycling processes and technologies. Efforts to exempt certain non-mechanical recycling processes from more stringent solid waste regulations in favor of classification as manufacturing processes not only creates an unfair regulatory environment but allows certain operations involving chemical processes to seek grants and tax benefits which other recyclers may not be able to access due to their classifications. ReMA will continue to advocate for uniform and equitable recycling definitions, supporting recognition in policy of the distinction between recycling (inclusive of both mechanical and non-mechanical recycling), and solid waste management, and opposing policies in which non-mechanical recycling is considered manufacturing and mechanical recycling is not.



Secure PFAS Liability Protections for Recycling and Other Essential Services

Without targeted liability protections, the recycled materials industry could face disproportionate and misplaced liability for inadvertently handling and processing end-of-life products and materials which may contain PFAS. Under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), recyclers could be held responsible for contamination stemming from products introduced into the supply chain decades ago. This risks undermining industry's ability to supply critical raw materials, destabilizing domestic manufacturing, and discouraging the recovery of valuable resources. As passive receivers and essential service providers, recyclers must be shielded from misplaced liability, and primary contributors must be held accountable.

Develop Feasible, Representative, and Scientifically Sound VOC Emission Factors

Outdated and unrepresentative VOC emission factors for metal shredding operations trigger disproportionate regulatory burdens under the Clean Air Act. These factors threaten the continued operation of shredders that supply critical recycled ferrous materials, used in more than 70 percent of steel produced in the U.S., and risk destabilizing the domestic steel supply chain. ReMA is committed to working collaboratively with EPA to establish scientifically sound, achievable VOC emissions factors for metal shredders that balance environmental protection and operational viability.

Promote Achievable Stormwater Management Requirements

Stormwater regulations and testing requirements must be grounded not only in sound science, but also in real-world operational realities and true environmental risk. ReMA understands there is no one-size-fits all model and supports site flexible stormwater permitting frameworks to avoid unnecessary operational burdens and maintain sound environmental practices.

Responsible Governance, Operational Safety and Workforce Readiness

ReMA upholds an unwavering commitment to safety and supports the Occupational Safety & Health Administration's (OSHA) mission to ensure "safe and healthful working conditions." Through its longstanding Alliance with OSHA, ReMA promotes collaborative safety efforts, supports industry specific education, and fosters a zero-accident culture across operations. With safety as our core value, we remain committed to advancing policies that optimize safety and operational outcomes.

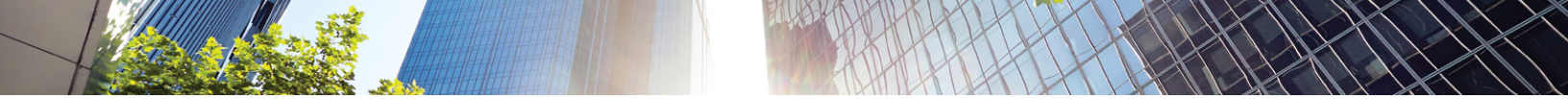
Ensuring safe worksites is just part of the equation. The industry also relies upon a skilled workforce, one that is prepared to meet the demands of ever-evolving recycling operations. Addressing labor shortages and workforce gaps is critical to ensure a robust workforce, and the industry is proactively investing in strategies to grow jobs by creating pathways into the sector, supporting STEM-based education, apprenticeship and internship programs, and specialized technical training. With this commitment to growing and developing the next generation of recyclers in mind, ReMA advocates for the following:

Encourage Flexible and Practical Workplace Safety Initiatives

Regulatory approaches that prioritize workplace safety must also preserve operational efficiency. While the industry supports the intention behind federal efforts to mandate new safety programs, the industry believes that a universal approach may hinder the ability of our employers to effectively protect their workers. As such, ReMA is encouraging flexible standards that account for the diverse operating conditions of our industry and allow employers to tailor safety plans to their site-specific risks.

Support Investment in Workforce Development Programs

Recyclers and other segments of the manufacturing supply chain compete to hire qualified workers from the same limited pool of job candidates, and under-staffed operations restrict the ability of recyclers to maximize recycling levels and efficiency. With more than half a million jobs supported by the industry, and an increasing demand for skilled labor, ReMA supports and will advocate for new initiatives and policy efforts to grow and expand workforce development programs, training the next generation of recyclers.



Address Safety Risks of a Battery Powered World

The rapid adoption of battery-powered products presents new and complex safety challenges for the recycled materials industry. Proper labeling, handling, and processing of batteries and items containing batteries is essential to prevent accidents and ensure the safety of workers and communities. ReMA is actively working to develop and promote industry best practices that address the full lifecycle of battery recycling, including collection, identification, sorting and safe processing. These efforts will mitigate fire and environmental risks, as well as support the recovery of vital critical minerals, ensuring a diversified supply chain. ReMA supports measures that enhance safety while recognizing practical realities of recycling operations, ensuring that the industry can protect workers, be good neighbors, and continue to provide a resilient supply of critical materials to the nation's manufacturing sectors.

Prevent Material Theft Through Industry Led Efforts and Well-Crafted Policy

Metal theft extends beyond mere inconvenience. It disrupts communities, poses safety risks, and can incur significant costs for both the public and affected businesses. For example, copper theft can compromise the functioning of telecommunications systems, leading to service disruptions and costly repairs, in addition to severe safety hazards due to exposed wires and damaged infrastructure. To address rising material theft, ReMA encourages the use of proven tools such as Scrap Theft Alert and industry engagement with law-enforcement. To further stop this issue, ReMA supports enforceable laws aimed at preventing theft from occurring and requiring steps to track suspicious activities. This will serve to aid enforcement and reduce the occurrence of these crimes, without impeding legitimate recycling operations.

Innovation and Investment

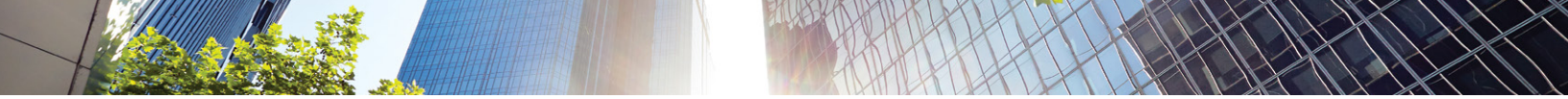
Fostering the growth of recycling infrastructure – including collection and processing—is critical to increasing material recovery, reducing pressure on the nation's overburdened landfills, and strengthening domestic supply chains. However, due to the industry's capital-intensive nature, that growth is dependent on policies that incentivize public and private investment in recycling infrastructure, use of recycled materials, and industry innovation. To ensure this growth is supported, ReMA supports policies that enable the industry to modernize, expand capacity, and meet the growing needs of the manufacturing sector.

Leverage Tax Policy to Strengthen the Recycled Materials Industry

Targeted tax policy is essential to scaling and modernizing the recycled materials industry. While many states offer tax credits or exemptions for manufacturing, recycling operations are often excluded due to unclear or inconsistent eligibility criteria—despite the industry supplying nearly 40% of manufacturers' raw material needs. ReMA supports efforts to clarify and expand access to these incentives, enabling the industry to fully benefit from support for equipment upgrades, processing expansion, and other critical investments. At the federal level, ReMA's mission is twofold. First, ReMA aims to advocate to reform outdated corporate and business tax codes to increase investment in innovative technologies. Additionally, ReMA supports the creation of a dedicated recycling tax credit that would not only incentivize investment in new infrastructure but would also support improving existing equipment and facilities. Such a credit would help to unlock private-sector investment, increase material recovery rates, and expand domestic material processing. Together, these efforts will drive progress, create new jobs, and increase supply chain resilience.

Support Reasonable and Achievable Recycled Content Requirements

Utilizing recycled content to manufacture new products, including plastics, supports job creation and investment opportunities. Voluntary recycled content incentives and prescribed mandates can both help increase demand and reduce reliance on primary materials, but only when aligned with material availability, technical feasibility and market realities. Overly rigid, or broadly applied mandates risk disrupting material flows, and undercutting existing infrastructure. Specifically, ReMA supports efforts to expand the use of recycled plastics from residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial sources, in appropriate applications, with development alongside industry.



Promote Innovation Through Data-Driven Solutions

Continued research and development are essential to expanding recycling capabilities and increasing the use of recycled materials in new products, packaging and infrastructure. ReMA supports policies that accelerate the adoption of low-carbon materials by advancing material design and improving recycling technologies, including sorting and processing.

Eliminate Barriers to Product Reuse and Repair

A vital part of the recyclable materials management ecosystem includes reusing goods and products, including electronics equipment, automotive parts, and tires. Unfortunately, recyclers are too often denied access to vital parts information, manuals, and blocked by digital locks which impede a product's reuse. ReMA advocates for policy measures that support the ability of the recycled materials industry to access necessary tools, information, and components to enable safe and efficient reuse and recycling.

Based in Washington, D.C., ReMA is the national voice for the recycled materials industry. We promote safe, economically sustainable, and environmentally responsible recycling through education, networking, and proactive advocacy. Our members drive innovation and efficiency, supporting resilient supply chains and a sustainable future for stronger local and state economies.

www.recycledmaterials.org

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