

ReCommunity says recycling quality must improve

By Bobby Elliott, *Resource Recycling*

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One of the largest single-stream MRF operators in the country says "non-conforming" materials are inundating facilities nationwide.

In an "[Inbound Quality Alert](#)" memo sent out earlier this month, ReCommunity states "nearly all" of the company's 33 U.S. facilities have been getting too much material they simply can't recover and recycle. Those materials, such as garden hoses, plastic bags, diapers, needles and other medical waste, propane tanks, as well as yard debris and food scraps, are contaminating the materials ReCommunity can recoup and hurting their value.

"Poor quality jeopardizes the usability of recycled materials throughout the supply chain, which is critical to the success of our mission; diverting recyclable materials from landfills," the alert reads.

Jeff Fielkow, ReCommunity's chief sales and marketing officer, told *Resource Recycling* the company is not alone in its inbound challenges. "Addressing poor inbound material quality is an industry-wide and supply-chain-long challenge," Fielkow wrote in an email. "Whether through surcharges or other measures, processors will be forced to share the cost of ensuring worker safety and end-market quality requirements."

The problematic materials that are showing up at ReCommunity's MRFs aren't permitted in residential and commercial recycling programs in the first place and Fielkow points to education as key to correcting the issue. "We as an industry must recommit to ramping up education and outreach," Fielkow stated.

Beyond educational outreach to residents by the waste management industry — informing them of what to throw in recycling bins and what to keep out— ReCommunity also suggests penalties will await communities who can't get things straight. "ReCommunity will reject unacceptable loads and charge generators (or downgrade prices) for the costs associated with such unacceptable items (such as transportation, re-loading, clean-up, alternate disposal)," the memo reads.

As for the company's relationship to single-stream programs, which, despite their popularity have always posed contamination challenges, Fielkow said the company remains committed to the approach as "the most effective, efficient means of recycling."



QUALITY ALERT

ReCommunity is committed to providing cost-effective, convenient recycling programs.

Through commercial services and residential single-stream recycling, we provide numerous economic, environmental and social benefits to businesses and communities. A key component to our success, however, is the quality of material placed in curbside recycling carts.

Nearly all of our facilities are experiencing an increase in non-conforming materials in the recyclables.

Unacceptable items—such as garden hoses, plastic bags, diapers, needles and other medical waste, propane tanks, as well as yard and food waste—expose our employees to unsafe materials, lower productivity and reduce end-market quality of materials. This increases costs of operation and lowers the value of your recyclables. *In other words, poor quality jeopardizes the usability of recycled materials throughout the supply chain, which is critical to the success of our mission; diverting recyclable materials from landfills.*

To help improve load quality, please ensure all users of your recycling program:

- **Conform to the Acceptable Materials list.** Please distribute acceptable materials lists regularly to the users of your recycling program. If you need assistance, we can help link or post the list to your website.
- **Empty all containers.** Chemical containers must be clean and empty to prevent fires. Even small amounts of cleaning agents, pool chemicals, aerosols and solvents create fire hazards.
- **Remove unsafe and unsanitary objects.** Materials that are sharp, unsanitary, or not on the acceptable materials list may harm employees and damage processing equipment.
- **Remove large items that can harm persons or processing equipment.** Large objects may be recyclable, but big pieces—especially metal—are dangerous to employees and damaging to processing equipment and should be recycled at scrap metal companies.
- **Understand rejection and charge ramifications.** ReCommunity will reject unacceptable loads and charge generators (or downgrade prices) for the costs associated with such unacceptable items (such as transportation, re-loading, clean-up, alternate disposal).

Together, with your help, we can improve the quality of the recycling stream and optimize the value for the entire recycling supply chain. High-quality loads reduce the risk of ReCommunity rejecting, charging and/or downgrading for delivering non-conforming loads.

For more about what you can do to improve your load quality, please contact me with questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jeffrey Fielkow'.

Jeffrey Fielkow

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SOME OF THE UNACCEPTABLE ITEMS FOUND IN THE PAST 60 DAYS



FOOD WASTE AND VEGETATION



CONTAMINATED MATERIAL AND FOOD WASTE



ONP SCREEN JAMMED WITH PLASTIC BAGS AND FOOD WASTE



CONTAMINATED MATERIAL AND FOOD WASTE



TANGLED WIRES AND WOOD



HOUSEHOLD TRASH, ELECTRONICS AND HOSES

QUALITY ALERT

HAVE QUESTIONS? CONTACT YOUR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

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