



## China tightens recycling import rules

We have all seen the pictures of cities in China with air pollution so bad citizens have resorted to wearing masks. To help improve the environment, the Chinese government recently implemented new rules severely restricting the import of recycled plastics and recycled paper.

With the paper mill industry declining in the US, we have been shipping much of our baled paper to China, where high-quality recycling is made into products such as cereal boxes and shipping cartons.

Historically, China has accepted 4 to 5 percent impurities in bales of recycled materials. Now, China will only accept bales containing less than 1 percent of those impurities. It is a big change that will be challenging to meet.

US recycling businesses will need to more stringently sort the waste they collect, and households will have to do a better job.

—Wall Street Journal

“Slow down a little bit, get everything sorted properly.”

—Public Radio International

participate in the green bin composting collection program. When we separate banana peels, coffee grounds, and food-soiled paper, they do not touch recycled paper. This keeps recycled paper dry and clean and helps San Francisco comply with China's new quality requirements.

### MEETING THE CHALLENGE

The City and Recology are taking the challenge to reduce impurities in our recycling bales head on.

We invested \$11 million upgrading Recycle Central in 2016 and will invest another \$3 million this year. This is where materials put in your blue bins go to be recycled. The new equipment at Recycle Central allows us to mine deeper into the recycling stream. That supports San Francisco's quest for zero waste, the goal of sending nothing to landfill or incineration.

We are also stepping up educational outreach to residents and businesses. We are sending informational letters to customers and updating posters and bin stickers with current information about what goes where. Please visit our website to download flyers to post in your home or business.

Recology collection drivers are increasing vigilance to ensure materials are kept separated and are also leaving friendly reminders when they find improperly sorted materials.

We will continue to provide updates and raise public awareness on this issue through articles in our customer newsletters, website, and social media platforms.

Please keep recycling and composting, with even more care.

### Together we can reduce contamination in recycling bales

Please:

- Compost all food scraps.
- Bag all plastic bags and film plastics. See story page 2.
- Give bottles and jars a quick rinse.



### WHY DO WE CARE?

It's a small world and all things environmental are interrelated. If we can help China make progress in protecting the environment, we all win.

The new restrictions also impact the San Francisco recycling program financially. When we don't meet China's quality standard for recycling bales, we must ship them to other paper mill locations, such as in Vietnam. That means higher transportation costs, which ultimately affect San Francisco residents and businesses.

### THE GOOD NEWS

We have an advantage because San Francisco has a reputation for producing high-quality bales of recycling. That's because most San Franciscans actively

## Correct sorting makes a huge, positive difference

In San Francisco all items for recycling should go into the blue bin. Because this makes recycling easier, more people participate. The downside is that clean paper put into the blue bin is exposed to items that can contaminate it, such as food and liquids left in containers.

You can help by making sure the items you put in your blue bin are clean. For example, instead of tossing a half-full jar of old mayonnaise in your recycling bin, take a moment to first empty the contents into the green composting bin.

Try to reduce purchases of single-use plastics containing food and beverages. Glass and metal containers are more recyclable and easier to separate from the paper. They are also reusable and a healthier alternative.



Incorporating these simple steps into your daily routine makes a huge, positive difference in keeping materials out of landfills and reducing impurities in San Francisco's recycling bales.

To help customers correct sorting mistakes, Recology drivers are putting friendly reminder tags on bins containing wrong materials. The most common sorting mistake people make is putting food scraps in their landfill (black) bins. All food scraps and soiled paper should go in your green bin.

New materials — such as bagged film plastics, empty aseptic juice boxes, and empty milk cartons — are accepted in the blue bin.

We are delivering larger recycling bins and smaller trash bins to residential properties. On average, neighborhoods with the new bins experience a 10 percent decrease in landfilling and a corresponding increase in recycling and composting.

The City's website [SFRecycles.org](http://SFRecycles.org) details what items go in which bins. Please check it out.

China requires recycled paper bales to contain less than 1% impurities.





# How to recycle – clean and dry – plastic bags in SF

San Francisco passed an ordinance that included a ban on single-use plastic bags at checkout counters, and many other cities and the State of California are following our City's lead.

Still, plastic bags and film plastic come into our lives. So, Recology and the City have instituted a recycling program enhancement to address this.

You can now recycle plastic bags and other clean, dry film or flimsy plastic, such as plastic wrap, in San Francisco. Just follow three simple steps:

1. Put clean and dry plastic bags and plastic wrap inside a plastic bag.  
**Please do not** throw loose plastic bags or plastic wrap into your recycling bin.
2. When the plastic bag is filled to about the size of a soccer ball, tie the top of the bag in a knot.
3. Put your bag of bags in your recycling bin.

When your bag of plastic bags reaches the initial sort deck at Recycle Central, the sorting facility on San Francisco's Pier 96, workers will pull your bag of bags off the line so it can be recycled.

If possible, use an exterior bag that is clear. That allows recycling workers to see what is inside.

1

Put clean and dry plastic bags and plastic wrap inside a plastic bag.

2

When it is about the **size of a soccer ball**, tie the top of the clear outer bag in a knot.

3

Put your bag of bags in your recycling bin.

Ensure your plastic bags and all film plastic in your bundle are clean and dry. This is important because it is a requirement imposed by the recycling markets that receive plastic bags.

It is important that your bag of bags be no larger than a soccer ball because larger bundles won't fit through the

system. Please do not put loose plastic bags in recycling; they wrap around sorting equipment at Recycle Central.

Please bring a tote bag when shopping and decline plastic bags whenever you can. When you receive plastic bags, please use the easy steps noted above to ensure they get recycled.



## Reducing waste pays in multiple ways

economic | environmental | personal

In order of importance, following the four R's — Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rot (compost) — leads to good things. When you practice these good, green habits, the planet will reward you with cleaner air and water and healthy, tasty fruits and vegetables. Your kids will respect you and you can save money.

First on the list, and most effective, is reduction. In the increasingly hectic lives we lead, how in the world do we get to this idyllic place where we make less trash, food tastes better, and we save money? And how do we do it in 10 minutes or less because that is all the time we've got?

The answer is simple steps. It takes less time to make and bring a healthy lunch — in reusable containers — than it takes to stand in line, order, and pay for takeout food that increasingly comes in single-use plastic containers. As an

added bonus, bringing your own lunch saves money, is healthier, and tastes better.

Just like planting herbs and vegetables, making your own meals gives you positive vibes of self-reliance and satisfaction from knowing you did it without creating waste. Get started by purchasing a reusable container, hit a farmers' market or local grocery, make a nice salad, put some goodies in it like sliced apples and nuts, and take it to work.

And bring your favorite, healthy drink in a reusable bottle. The new ones can keep beverages hot or cold for hours and come in small sizes that are easy to transport. You get to enjoy a tasty drink and prevent another plastic bottle contributing to the world's garbage problem (3.5 million tons a day, "Drowning in garbage," *Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 21, 2017).

Take only what you need. Make full use of what you have. Simple words of wisdom and action. Together, we can make a significant, positive difference.

To see more examples of simple steps to reduce the amount of trash we make, visit [RecologySF.com](https://www.recology.com/sf).



### RECYCLING, COMPOST, AND TRASH COLLECTION:

Recology Sunset Scavenger  
(415) 330-1300

Recology Golden Gate  
(415) 626-4000

Debris Box Service  
(888) 404-4008

BulkyltemRecycling.com  
(415) 330-1300

