ISRI Position on Recyclable Materials Theft[1]

Overview

The unintentional purchase, of stolen materials has, for many years, been a risk present in recycling. The problem arises not from any act or omission by individual members of the industry, but instead, from the types of materials that it handles. In order to recycle the vast quantities of materials that are required by the industries that manufacture new products from recyclable materials, and to assure that recyclable materials do not end up in landfills or litter the landscape, members of the recycling industry purchase, process, and sell hundreds of thousands of tons of commodities every day. These commodities consist of millions of separate items that must be handled quickly, efficiently, and in large volumes. Identification of suspect items is made difficult because; recyclable materials are purchased not as specific items, but rather by weight. From time to time, it is possible that stolen property will find its way into the millions of items that make up the commodities legitimately handled each day by members of the recycling industry.

It is the position of the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, Inc. (ISRI) that, with respect to purchase of recyclable materials:

- The purchase of materials that are known by the company to be stolen must not be tolerated; and

- In cooperation with appropriate authorities and affected parties, each member of the recycling industry, along with law enforcement and the affected community, should take positive steps to reduce the risk of the unintentional purchase of stolen materials.

During the course of daily operations, each member of the industry needs to be aware of the potential for inadvertent or unintentional purchase of stolen materials. The theft of recyclable materials is a community problem--not just a recycling industry problem--extending well beyond the boundaries of ISRI members' recycling facilities.

Each member of the recycling industry is urged to:

- Familiarize themselves with and follow applicable state and local statutes and regulations regarding the purchase of recyclable materials;

- Continue to be involved in the community served;

- Be aware of the types of materials frequently stolen; and

- Communicate and work cooperatively with community leaders, law enforcement officials and their agencies, and members of the community most often affected by these thefts to inform them about the scrap recycling industry, its operations, and its requirements, and develop programs designed to reduce the theft of recyclable materials.

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[1] As adopted by the ISRI Board of Directors on April 24, 2017.

Because this is an issue requiring the cooperative efforts of community leaders, law enforcement officials and their agencies, and members of the community who have been or could be victimized by the theft of recyclable materials, all affected parties are urged to:

- Take steps within their own organizations and communities to adopt improved security measures to reduce the opportunity for theft of recyclable materials and advise the recycling industry, as soon as possible, in their community when such thefts do occur utilizing ScrapTheftAlert.com or other methods;
- Work in cooperation with members of the recycling industry to resolve the problems caused by the thefts of recyclable materials in their community;
- Understand and appreciate the unique nature and requirements of the recycling industry and its operations; and
- Vigorously apprehend and prosecute those responsible for thefts.

It is only through the active cooperation of the entire community that the problems presented by the theft of recyclable materials can be addressed successfully.