


rather than allowing scrap piles to grow too big.

THE SAFER THE BETTER

On the topic of scrap yard safety, Alton Scott Newell III of Newell Recycling Equipment in the USA revealed in Singapore that the BIR Shredder Committee would conduct a safety questionnaire for shredder owners and operators to build a picture of the different types of shredder incidents and their relative frequency, with the aim of promoting best avoidance and response practices.

SHREDDER INVASION

The number of shredders installed in China has soared by around 250 over the past two years to a new total of 317, according to Newell. Shredder numbers elsewhere in the world have been largely static, with the global total of 1 158 comprising significant contributions from the USA (322) and Europe (300). Fourth on the list, and the only other country with a three-figure shredder population, is Japan on 110. 



'LET'S NOT BE TOO FIXATED ON CHINA'

The Singapore conference addressed the impact of China's import policy shift towards overseas suppliers of recyclables. According to newly installed BIR president Tom Bird, China will remain a major market.

At the same time, he said, 'let's not be too fixated on China'. 'We are a resilient industry, we have proven that so many times in the past. Let's also focus on other markets, places and regions offering new opportunities.' Murat Bayram of European Metal Recycling Ltd spoke of 'life after China' with material flows redirected to other countries. 'Quality is the key for success in the future: scrap will be needed today, tomorrow and the day after,' he said.

LESSONS LEARNED

When China imposed new scrap import limitations two years ago, Arnaud Brunet had just started in his job as BIR director general. 'I thought, O my God, this industry is going to suffer so badly,' he recalled. 'The recycling industry has indeed suffered. China's policy has forced us to do better and we need to do better. We need to deliver better quality, it's the only way forward.'

SHIFTING SCRAP FLOWS

A large proportion of the materials now heading to new destinations will still end up in China, 'so China is not out of the equation', noted David Chiao of Uni-All Group Ltd in the USA. China's import policy shift prompted many domestic recyclers to move to other countries, notably elsewhere in South East Asia. However, several of these nations are now introducing tighter measures to control incoming volumes, according to the China Scrap Plastics Association's Executive President Dr Steve Wong. He pointed in particular to stricter inspections now undertaken in Malaysia, Thailand and, more recently, Indonesia.

HIGHER CONSUMPTION AT HOME

The import changes in China have greatly reduced opportunities for US exports of the lower grades of plastic whereas new outlets have been emerging in Asia for the higher grades of LDPE and HDPE, revealed Sally Houghton of the Plastics Recycling Corporation of California. The domestic market in the USA was 'much healthier', she added, with PET demand boosted in California by the prospect of mandated recycled contents.

BLAME IT ON THE MESSENGER?

'Certain public media' have targeted the recycling industry with unfounded criticism, according to Michael Lion of China-based Everwell Resources Ltd. 'We have a problem with identity and image,' he told the BIR convention in Singapore.

The question is, how to turn the tide? The world recycling organisation's director general Arnaud Brunet and new president Tom Bird both identified awareness campaigns as the appropriate response. 'We need to educate people that we are the solution,' said Bird.

According to Adina Renee Adler, vice president International Relations at the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI), the recycling sector has to tell the media 'the story of what we do, who we are and the contribution we make'.