



The Association of
Plastic Recyclers

News Release

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PLASTIC BOTTLE RECYCLING STRONG DESPITE CHALLENGES *Pounds, Rate Largely Remain Steady in 2018*

WASHINGTON (December 18, 2019)—The domestic collection of plastic bottles for recycling rose 52 million pounds, or 1.8 percent, to reach nearly 2.9 billion pounds in 2018. At the same time, there was little change in the overall recycling rate for plastic bottles, with a slight decline of 0.4 percent from the prior year, according to figures released jointly today by the [Association of Plastic Recyclers \(APR\)](#) and the [American Chemistry Council \(ACC\)](#).

The 29th annual [National Postconsumer Plastic Bottle Recycling Report](#) indicates the overall recycling rate for plastic bottles in 2018 was 28.9 percent, and the five-year compounded annual growth rate for plastic bottle recycling remains relatively steady, falling just 0.4 percent.

The report also shows that the overwhelming majority of plastic bottles collected for recycling is processed domestically, as exports of postconsumer plastic bottles declined. In 2018, 90 percent of total plastic bottles collected for recycling in the United States were processed domestically. Less than 8 percent of PET bottles and less than 14 percent of HDPE bottles collected domestically were processed outside of the country, with less than half of exports leaving North America.

Domestic capacity utilization for both PET and HDPE rose in 2018. PET reclaimer plant capacity utilization rose to 80 percent with HDPE climbing to 73 percent.

"Plastics recycling is a vibrant, resilient industry that continues to remain strong in a challenging environment," said Steve Alexander, president of APR. "Despite the reduction in export markets, demand for quality recycled material remains robust, and many recyclers are investing in updating and expanding our domestic infrastructure to meet that demand."

"Brand owners have made public commitments to use significantly more recycled content in their products and packages in the months ahead," added Steve Russell, vice president of ACC's Plastics Division. "And manufacturers across the value chain are creating more circular business

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models for using—and reusing—plastics. It is therefore increasingly important to get as much of the right plastics into the recycling bin as possible.”

The per capita consumption of plastic bottles has been steady for the past six years. Together, PET and HDPE bottles make up 97.1 percent of the U.S. market for plastic bottles with PP comprising 1.8 percent, LDPE 0.7 percent and PVC 0.3 percent. Together, PET and HDPE comprise 98.9 percent of bottles recycled with PP comprising 1.1 percent.

The 2018 United States National Postconsumer Plastic Bottle Recycling Report is based on a survey of reclaimers conducted by More Recycling, formerly Moore Recycling.

Additional information is available at www.plasticsrecycling.org and www.recycleyourplastics.org.

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The Association of Plastic Recyclers (APR) is The Voice of Plastics Recycling®. As the international trade association representing the plastics recycling industry, membership includes independent recycling companies of all sizes, processing numerous resins, as well as consumer product companies, equipment manufacturers, testing laboratories, organizations, and others committed to the success of plastics recycling. APR advocates the recycling of all plastics. Visit www.plasticsrecycling.org for more information.

The American Chemistry Council (ACC) represents the leading companies engaged in the business of chemistry. ACC members apply the science of chemistry to make innovative products and services that make people's lives better, healthier and safer. ACC is committed to improved environmental, health and safety performance through Responsible Care®; common sense advocacy designed to address major public policy issues; and health and environmental research and product testing. The business of chemistry is a \$526 billion enterprise and a key element of the nation's economy. It is among the largest exporters in the nation, accounting for ten percent of all U.S. goods exports. Chemistry companies are among the largest investors in research and development. Safety and security have always been primary concerns of ACC members, and they have intensified their efforts, working closely with government agencies to improve security and to defend against any threat to the nation's critical infrastructure. <http://www.americanchemistry.com>

