



John Sheeran
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Scrap Tires and Producer Responsibility

Since 1990, the Rubber Manufacturers Association (RMA) has embraced a free market-based shared responsibility system to improve the management of scrap tires in the United States. RMA works with governments, industry and the public to develop sustainable markets that divert scrap tires from landfills and eliminate old stockpiles of scrap tires. RMA focuses on development of self-sustaining markets, creation of effective state laws to address stockpile abatement, regulations and enforcement, being an information clearinghouse and providing technical data in support of markets and coordination among stakeholders.

The shared responsibility approach to scrap tire management has been highly successful in the United States. Since 1990, the percentage of tires going into economically viable end use markets has increased from 11 percent of the scrap tires generated in 1990 to about 96 percent of the scrap tires generated in 2013. Likewise, the number of tires in stockpiles has been decreased by over 90 percent, from at least 900 million tires in 1990 to about 75 million today.

The scrap tire recovery rate is higher than that of aluminum cans (67%), plastic bottles (30%), paper (65%) or glass bottles (34%) and far better than products recently regulated under extended producer responsibility like batteries or thermostats (about 10%), or electronic wastes (about 25%). Only automotive batteries have a higher landfill diversion rate at over 98 percent. While the current scrap tire system is robust, RMA's vision is 100 percent of end-of-life tires entering beneficial end use markets and no remaining stockpiled scrap tires in the United States.

The free-market based shared responsibility approach has established a successful, stable scrap tire management infrastructure, regulated by state laws governing tire hauling, storage, processing and end-use markets. Establishing an extended producer responsibility (EPR) system in the United States would add costs without any significant benefit, displacing and bringing inefficiency to a well-functioning free market system.

About the Rubber Manufacturers Association. RMA is the national trade association representing tire manufacturers that make tires in the United States. RMA's scrap tire management efforts are a reflection of the tire industry's commitment to the concept of shared responsibility for its products when they are no longer suitable for use on vehicles. RMA began its scrap tire program in 1990 under the auspices of the Scrap Tire Management Council. RMA works with all stakeholders, including states, U.S. EPA and the industry to develop markets, reduce scrap tire stockpiles and implement state regulations that foster sustainable scrap tire markets. RMA supports all scrap tire markets that are environmentally sound and economically feasible.