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New dynamics redefine nonferrous scrap markets

by MAURA KELLER

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The nonferrous scrap market has long experienced cyclical swings tied to global manufacturing activity and commodity pricing. But today's shifts are more structural than cyclical. Electrification, artificial intelligence infrastructure, renewable energy expansion and domestic manufacturing investments are converging simultaneously, transforming how copper, aluminum and other nonferrous metals are sourced, valued and recycled.

From electric vehicles (EVs) to grid modernization and hyperscale data centers, demand for conductive, lightweight and high-performance metals is rising rapidly. Industry leaders say recycled metal is no longer viewed simply as a cost-effective substitute for primary production. Instead, it is increasingly seen as a strategic resource connected to energy security, supply chain resilience and decarbonization goals.

"We're watching two powerful forces move at the same time: electrification and digital infrastructure," said Todd Thomas, founder and chief executive officer of Woodchuck, a company that focuses on waste-to-energy solutions for contractors, manufacturers and biomass producers. EVs are increasing demand for copper, aluminum and battery materials, while large-scale data centers – especially those designed to support artificial intelligence – require significant quantities of copper for power distribution, switchgear and cooling systems. When those trends converge, Thomas noted, secondary metal supply becomes more than just a lower-cost option. It becomes strategically important.

Tiffiany Moehring, head of communications and marketing at American Battery Technology Company, agrees that the pace of technological change is reshaping global metal demand. The continued expansion of electric vehicles and data centers, she explained, is pushing the industry to develop more advanced recycling technologies capable of recovering valuable nonferrous metals at scale. Data centers in particular are becoming a strategic sector, with investments projected to grow substantially as artificial intelligence and cloud computing expand.

The rapid deployment of lithium-ion batteries is also accelerating demand for metals used in electrification technologies. Moehring noted that global lithium-ion battery deployment has grown dramatically in recent years. While EVs account for most of that demand, lithium-ion batteries are also essential to energy storage systems and digital infrastructure – both of which rely on a steady supply of recyclable metals.

The growth of copper will be driven by renewable energy installations, electric vehicles, grid expansion and AI-driven data centers, all of which rely heavily on copper's conductivity.

Copper at the Center

Few metals illustrate this transformation more clearly than copper. According to Erin Smith, deputy director of EHS & Recycling at the Copper Development Association, demand projections alone demonstrate the scale of change.

"In the most recent S&P report, demand is set to increase by 50 percent by 2040 – from 28 million metric tons in 2025 to 42 million metric tons in 2040," Smith said. Growth will be driven by renewable energy installations, electric vehicles, grid expansion and AI-driven data centers, all of which rely heavily on copper's conductivity.

Meeting that demand will require what Smith describes as an "all-of-the-above" strategy that includes increased domestic mining and refining, continued trade with reliable partners and expanded recycling.

Scrap plays a crucial role in that strategy. Smith emphasized that recycled copper is an essential raw material feedstock supporting electrification infrastructure, including EV production and data center construction. The United States also possesses what she calls the second-largest copper "urban mine" in the world – roughly 85 million metric tons of copper embedded in buildings, wiring, plumbing and consumer products currently in use.

Unlike some metals, copper can be recycled indefinitely without losing its performance characteristics. That makes scrap recovery an important component of meeting future supply needs.

Thomas echoed copper's importance, particularly as artificial intelligence accelerates data center construction. The scale of new AI facilities, he said, is adding another layer of demand on top of the already intense electrification push.

Scrap's Strategic Shift

Historically, scrap metal served as a flexible supplement to primary production, rising and falling with commodity cycles. Today, however, many industry leaders say the market is evolving into something more strategically important.

"In the past, scrap was often viewed as a cyclical input," Thomas said. "Today, it's increasingly seen as a domestic, faster-to-market source of metal units when primary supply is constrained."

That shift is also changing how scrap quality is evaluated. According to Thomas, buyers are placing greater emphasis on clean, well-characterized material that can move quickly through recycling systems. High-quality scrap tends to command stronger pricing, while mixed or contaminated material requires more processing and tighter quality controls.

Moehring noted that the growing presence of EV batteries and renewable energy infrastructure is also altering the composition of scrap streams. The expanding adoption of wind turbines, solar panels and battery energy storage systems is increasing demand for nonferrous metals such as copper and aluminum while also creating new opportunities for recovering critical minerals from end-of-life equipment.

Metals such as lithium, cobalt, nickel and manganese can be recycled repeatedly without losing their integrity, Moehring explained. This makes them well

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EGLE awards $3.87 million supporting renewable energy projects

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) has announced the seventh round of Renewables Ready Communities Awards (RRCA) to support nine communities hosting solar power and battery storage projects that will provide Michigan households and businesses with clean energy.

"These awards demonstrate EGLE's commitment to partnering with communities to build Michigan's clean energy future," said EGLE director Phil Roos. "Through the Renewables Ready Communities program, local governments are gaining the resources they need to reinvest in public safety, essential services, and projects that strengthen their communities."

The RRCA program offers flexible funding to local governments for community improvements and infrastructure projects and services like road and bridge repairs, public safety, park enhancements and building upgrades. This program incentivizes communities to host large-scale renewable energy projects such as wind, solar and battery storage by providing awards that supplement the project's tax revenue and community benefits.

The newest awards

The current round of awards totals $3.87 million and supports nine local units of government. Half of each award is disbursed upon the start of energy project construction, and the other half upon the start of operation. Here are the awardees and the related renewable energy projects:

- $375,000 to Coldwater Township in Branch County for hosting Cold Creek Energy Center, a 75 megawatt (MW) battery storage project with an expected construction date of September 2026 and an operation date of March 2027.
- $183,500 to Delta County for hosting Renegade Solar, a 73.4 MW solar project under construction with an expected operation date of June 2026.
- $500,000 to Fairgrove Township in Tuscola County (awaiting State Administrative Board approval) for hosting Tuscola II Energy Storage, a 100 MW battery storage project with an expected construction date of April 2027 and an operation date of May 2028.
- $275,000 to Grant Township in Cheboygan County for hosting Northern Waters Solar, a 110 MW solar project with an expected construction date of June 2027 and operation date of December 2028.
- $425,000 to Lawrence Township in Van Buren County for hosting Murch Solar, an 85 MW solar project under construction with an expected operation date of February 2027.
- $120,035 to Mason Township in Arenac County for hosting Au Gres Solar, a 55 MW solar project with an expected construction date of July 2026 and operation date of September 2028.
- $750,000 to Midland Township in Midland County (waiting for State Administrative Board approval) for hosting Salzburg Battery Storage, a 150 MW battery storage project with an expected construction date of June 2027 and an operation date of December 2028.
- $740,000 to Newberg Township in Cass County (waiting for State Administrative Board approval) for hosting Three Lakes Solar, a 148 MW solar project with an expected construction date of April 2027 and an operation date of December 2028.
- $500,000 to Saline Township in Washtenaw County (waiting for State Administrative Board approval) for hosting Voyager Storage, a 100 MW battery storage project under construction with an expected operation date of January 2027.

RecycLiCo completes construction of Innovation Centre Laboratory Facility

RecycLiCo Battery Materials Inc., a critical minerals refining and lithium-ion battery upcycling company, has opened its Innovation Centre laboratory in Delta, British Columbia.

The company can now provide bench-scale hydrometallurgical processing and technical research and development services for projects across the metals, mining, refining and battery materials sectors, supporting miners, refiners, OEMs and technology developers. The lab is the first step in the roll-out of the Innovation Centre which will include adjacent pilot plant facilities, enabling clients and partners to move from concept to pilot scale within a fully powered, ready-to-build environment. The Innovation Centre is designed to support process development, flowsheet validation, pilot-scale testing and commercialization.

"This milestone is the result of disciplined execution of our capital-efficient approach to building the technical infrastructure required for long term growth and commercialization," said Richard Sadowsky, interim chief executive officer of RecycLiCo.

RecycLiCo's technology focuses on refining critical minerals, whether already in circulation or as part of primary extraction, as part of the strengthening of domestic North American supply chains and reducing reliance on offshore refining capacity.

BENLEE Manufacturing reports record 2025 revenue and shipments

BENLEE Manufacturing, America's leading producer of heavy-duty roll-off trailers and gondola trailers for the scrap metal recycling, waste management and environmental services industries, announced record revenue and a record number of trailers and trucks shipped in 2025. The company attributed the milestone year to surging demand from domestic scrap metal recyclers supplying American steel mills and from environmental service companies supporting U.S. oil and gas production – two sectors benefiting significantly from current trade and energy policies as well as explosive growth in AI data centers, semiconductor plants, rare earth materials and defense spending.

With 50 percent tariffs now imposed on imported steel and aluminum under Section 232, domestic steel production is accelerating, creating increased demand for the scrap metal collection equipment BENLEE has manufactured in Michigan for more than 50 years. Major increases in AI data center construction, semiconductor plant development, rare earth materials, and defense spending are fueling additional growth in steel consumption and the recycling infrastructure that supports it. At the same time, expanded domestic oil and gas development is driving growth in the environmental services sector, where BENLEE's roll-off trailers are essential tools for waste handling and site remediation.

"The steel tariffs are a game changer for American industry, and our record 2025 results reflect exactly that," said Greg Brown, chief executive officer and owner of BENLEE Manufacturing. "When domestic steel mills run harder, scrap metal recyclers need more equipment – and that equipment comes from us. We shipped more trailers and trucks last year than at any point in our company's history, and we expect 2026 to be even stronger."

BENLEE Manufacturing operates from a 19 acre campus in Romulus, Michigan.

The company has never offshored production, and has maintained its commitment to domestic manufacturing through multiple economic cycles. With record 2025 results and a strong order book heading into 2026, BENLEE is actively investing in its workforce and production capacity to meet accelerating demand.

Recology recycling driver wins top honor from national association

The National Waste and Recycling Association named Recology driver Dugaldo Padilla Residential Driver of the Year, the industry's top honor for refuse collectors employed by a regional company.

More than 60,000 trash collectors work in the U.S. To be considered for Driver of the Year, collectors must achieve an excellent safety record, maintain a strong focus on customer service and actively participate in community service events.

Padilla, known as Doug to his customers and co-workers, has all that and more. His passion for driving a collection truck and tipping all the bins on his route is palpable in his demeanor and evident in his steady gaze.

"I love my job. I love what I do," Padilla said.

In 18 years of driving for Recology, Padilla has built a career defined by consistency and reliability. Whether he's behind the wheel of a side loader or rear loader, Padilla's dedication and focus ensure his work is done safely.

Beyond his daily responsibilities, Padilla participates in community events and outreach efforts. Each year, he takes part in a marathon to support domestic violence prevention – a cause he wholeheartedly supports.

Dugaldo will be formally invited to receive his Driver of the Year award this June at the National Waste and Recycling Association annual gala in Washington, DC.

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Nonferrous

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suited for supporting a circular supply chain for battery materials.

Smith added that sustainability pressures are reinforcing these changes. Manufacturers and investors increasingly require transparency around recycled content and embodied carbon as part of climate commitments and environmental reporting frameworks. As a result, recycled material is becoming an important factor in procurement decisions.

Aluminum's Growing Importance

Aluminum markets are experiencing similar shifts, particularly as EV production expands. Lightweight materials remain critical for improving vehicle efficiency and extending battery range, and aluminum content per vehicle continues to rise.

"As demand for aluminum products grows due to EVs, data centers and other products, the need for aluminum scrap becomes increasingly important," said Matt Meenan, vice president of external affairs at the Aluminum Association.

At the same time, the United States exports large quantities of aluminum scrap each year. According to Meenan, the country exports roughly two million metric tons annually, even as domestic manufacturers face shortages of raw metal.

Recovering and reusing that material domestically could help support billions of dollars in recent U.S. aluminum manufacturing investments while saving significant amounts of energy compared to producing primary aluminum.

For that reason, the Aluminum Association believes maintaining a strong domestic scrap supply is critical. Improved collection systems, better sorting technologies and policies that encourage more scrap to remain within the United States could help strengthen domestic supply chains.

More than half of aluminum produced in the United States already comes from recycled material. As demand for EVs, infrastructure and digital technology grows, the importance of secondary aluminum feedstock is expected to increase.

Renewables and Infrastructure Demand

Renewable energy infrastructure is another major driver of nonferrous metal demand. However, the impact extends far beyond solar panels and wind turbines themselves.

"It's not just about building solar arrays or wind farms," Thomas said. Expanding renewable energy capacity also requires upgrades to transmission lines, substations, storage systems and local distribution networks in order to handle new electrical loads.

Those upgrades increase demand for copper and aluminum while also highlighting the environmental benefits of recycled metals. Recycled copper and aluminum generally carry lower embodied carbon footprints than primary production, making scrap an important component of decarbonization strategies.

Smith said sustainability metrics are increasingly shaping procurement decisions. Recycled content disclosures and carbon reporting are becoming routine elements of material selection as companies work to meet internal climate goals and external reporting requirements.

Batteries and Recycling Challenges

While most metals in EVs and data centers enter traditional recycling streams, batteries present unique challenges.

"Distinct recycling considerations associated with EVs and data centers primarily involve battery materials, which are deemed hazardous under current regulations," Meenan explained. Batteries must be removed and processed through specialized recycling systems, while other metals from these products typically enter conventional recycling channels.

Thomas emphasized that lithium-ion battery packs present operational challenges, including fire risks and specialized storage and transportation requirements. Even before large numbers of EVs reach end-of-life, damaged batteries and manufacturing scrap are already testing recycling logistics systems.

Battery chemistry also varies widely, which complicates recovery processes. "Not all batteries are built the same," Thomas said, noting that differences in chemistry make standardized recycling more difficult.

Moehring added that the scale of future battery waste underscores the need for advanced recycling infrastructure. Global EV battery demand is projected to grow significantly in the coming years, potentially generating large volumes of end-of-life batteries by 2040.

Processing that material efficiently will require expanded recycling capacity and new technologies capable of recovering valuable materials at high rates.

Meanwhile, scrap availability itself depends on product life cycles. "Metals in EVs and data centers take decades to retire," Meenan said. As a result, scrap supply may remain limited even as demand continues to grow.

Looking ahead, many industry leaders expect the scrap market to become more specialized and strategically important.

"Over the next decade, I expect recycled metal to be treated as a strategic asset tied to industrial resilience," Thomas said. If electrification and AI infrastructure continue expanding, copper and aluminum demand will likely remain elevated, with recycled supply helping bridge gaps when primary production cannot keep pace.

WM joins SWANA as a corporate partner to help advance waste industry

The Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) announced today that WM, formerly Waste Management, has joined as its newest corporate partner as part of efforts to advance safety and best practices across the waste and resource management industry.

WM is North America's leading provider of comprehensive environmental solutions with sustainability central to its business. For more than 50 years, WM has played an essential role in keeping communities clean and safe, with many of its customers SWANA members. Across the US and Canada, WM has the largest disposal network and collection fleet, is the largest recycler, and is a leader in the beneficial use of landfill gas, with a growing network of renewable natural gas plants and an established portfolio of landfill gas-to-electricity plants, as well as the largest heavy-duty natural gas truck fleet in the industry.

"WM is such an important part of the industry and an important supporter of SWANA over the years. Many WM employees have been active SWANA volunteers and leaders, supporting SWANA Technical Divisions, chapters, training courses, the board of directors, and more," shared SWANA chief executive officer, Amy Lestition Burke."

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Waste-to-Energy Report: Global growth, market downturn in China

The global stock of waste-to-energy plants continues to grow. While the market downturn in China is putting pressure on the domestic industry, project activity in Central and South-East Asia is increasing. In Europe, modernization projects are increasingly coming into focus, alongside the expansion of plant capacity in Southern and Eastern Europe. These are key findings of an updated market study by ecoprog.

The number of plants for the thermal treatment of non-recyclable waste (Waste-to-Energy, WtE) continued to rise in 2025. By the end of 2025, more than 3,100 thermal waste treatment plants were in operation worldwide, with a combined capacity of over 640 million tonnes per year. Compared with the previous year, this represents a net increase of around 16 million tonnes per year. In total, new capacities amounting to approximately 18 million tonnes per year were commissioned, while just under 2 million tonnes per year were decommissioned.

With more than 12 million tonnes per year, the largest increase once again occurred in China.

However, this figure should not obscure the fact that the market downturn in China is continuing. In the record year of 2021, 190 plants with a combined capacity of around 64 million tonnes per year were commissioned there. In the meantime, WtE capacities in most major cities along the densely populated eastern seaboard are sufficient or even oversized. As a result of economic difficulties and the expansion of recycling, many plant operators are now struggling to secure sufficient volumes of waste. For competitors in China, this presents a double challenge: most of the major players are both plant constructors and operators. As constructors, they lack new projects; as operators, they lack available waste.

From a global market perspective, however, China is a special case – albeit a significant one. Outside China, the Asian market is gaining increasing momentum, particularly in countries such as Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. The number of projects is also growing in Central Asia, for example in Uzbekistan.

The main driver behind this development is the worsening waste management situation. In some countries, including Indonesia, years of efforts to build institutions and develop waste management plans are now bearing fruit. Last but not least, the development of several WtE markets is also attributable to the aggressive market expansion strategies of Chinese developers seeking to open up new sales markets.

The number of plants in Europe is also continuing to grow, albeit by only around 300,000 tonnes per year in 2025. Newly commissioned capacity of 1.2 million tonnes per year was offset by the decommissioning of almost 900,000 tonnes per year. This shows that in Europe, the replacement and modernization of existing plants have now become more important than new-build business.

However, 2025 was an exceptional year in this respect; in the coming years, ecoprog expects an increase in new-build projects again, particularly in Southern and Eastern Europe. WtE capacity is still required there in order to implement adopted EU legislation and to reduce the share of waste sent to landfill.

At the same time, the current phase of modernization in countries such as Germany is only just beginning, while in France this process is already at a more advanced stage. In the coming years, ecoprog expects the commissioning of new and modernized combustion lines with a capacity of between two and four million tonnes per year.

The study Waste to Energy is the leading reference work in the WtE sector. It includes a country-specific forecast of global market developments through to 2034.

Further information on the newly published edition Waste to Energy 2025/2026 is available at www.ecoprog.com.

Program focuses on battery collection, recycling, reuse

Whether it's small single-use batteries, household rechargeable batteries or large batteries for electric vehicles, disposal can pose a significant safety risk to people and the planet. Conversely, batteries contain valuable materials which, when properly managed, can be returned to the supply chain to realize substantial environmental, economic, and social benefits.

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) is launching a Battery Circularity Program to improve how batteries are collected, recycled and reprocessed across the state.

By using recycled materials, the manufacturing of new batteries consumes less energy, water and natural resources. Proper recycling can also mitigate fires, reducing risk to lives and infrastructure. Recovering batteries also strengthens circular supply chains and reduces dependence on foreign sources of critical minerals, encourages innovation and creates local jobs.

As part of EGLE's efforts, NextCycle Michigan will launch a special accelerator to support the advancement of battery recycling solutions. The program will provide operational and technical coaching to move initiatives toward implementation in Michigan. The application period will open in the summer, with more information.

California's Better Bag Ban now in effect

California's improved plastic bag ban went into effect. California's previous bag ban, first passed in 2024, had allowed for thicker plastic film bags under the guise that they were "reusable." CalRecycle (California's Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery) found that these thicker bags were often not reused and instead treated like single-use bags, paving the way for this amendment to the legislation.

In response to this news, Ocean Conservancy's director of Plastics Policy Dr. Anja Brandon, released the following statement:

"2026 marks a new chapter in tackling plastic pollution in California, as the first year the state will have a true plastic bag ban. By removing the exception for thicker plastic bags, California will finally live up to its intended goal of eliminating plastic grocery bags, which is great news for the ocean and Californians fed up with plastic pollution. Plastic grocery bags are not only one of the most common plastics polluting our beaches, but also one of the top five deadliest forms of plastic pollution to marine life."

Key plastic bag pollution figures:

Americans use 100 billion plastic grocery bags each year, and on average, plastic grocery bags are used for only 12 minutes before being thrown away.

A peer-reviewed study from 2025 showed that plastic bag bans result in 25 to 47 percent reduction of plastic bags in the environment where implemented.

Plastic bags were among the top five deadliest forms of ocean plastic pollution, according to Ocean Conservancy research from 2017. Turtles and other sea life often mistake plastic bags for jellyfish and ingest them.

In 2025, Ocean Conservancy-led peer-reviewed research calculated how much plastic is deadly to certain marine animals if ingested, and found that, for example, less than a tennis ball's worth of soft plastics (like grocery bags) has a 50 percent chance of killing a harbor seal.

- In compiling the data for this research, the scientists reviewed numerous instances where plastic bags directly killed a range of marine animals, from sperm whales and Risso's dolphins to manatees and green sea turtles. In most of these cases, their death was caused by plastic bags blocking their intestinal tract.

Since 1986, Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup® (ICC) volunteers have collected nearly 3 million plastic grocery bags from beaches and waterways in the United States, with 700,000 plastic bags from beaches and waterways in California alone.

In 7 of the 10 years before the new ban passed, grocery bags were ranked in the top 10 most commonly collected items by California Coastal Cleanup Day volunteers, where they cleaned up enough plastic bags to span the length of the Golden Gate Bridge nearly 30 times.

Only one-third of glass is recycled: Glass report shows how communities are helping

The Glass Recycling Foundation (GRF) has released its 2025 Impact Report, highlighting measurable progress in strengthening glass recycling systems across the U.S through strategic grant making and industry collaboration. At a time when only one-third of glass is recovered for recycling and 9.2 million tons of glass still go to landfills annually, GRF's work continues to address infrastructure gaps and expand access to glass recycling.

In 2025, GRF awarded $76,000 in grants that supported five projects, diverting 4,459 total tons of glass or over 8.9 million pounds of glass from landfills. These efforts are made possible by the generous donations from beverage brands, glass manufacturers, community foundations, trade associations and other organizations that understand the value of recycling glass.

"Our impact has grown more than sevenfold since 2022 – from 600 tons diverted to 4,459 tons this year. That progress is a direct result of the donors, partners, and communities who believe stronger glass recycling systems are possible," said Scott DeFife, GRF board president. This progress underscores GRF's continued commitment to strengthening glass recycling access, improving material quality, and supporting innovative solutions that build more resilient recycling systems.

Notable 2025 funded projects supported by a GRF grant include:

- Baldwin County, Alabama – $21K Awarded: Grant funding supported the purchase of collection containers, a glass crusher and resident education to launch a new rural recycling program. In its first year, the program collected 24.4 tons of glass and served more than 3,000 residents in an area with limited end markets.
- City of Macomb, Illinois – $15K Awarded: Funding supported the purchase of a glass dumpster from Ripple Glass to expand recycling access in McDonough County. In its first year, the program collected 5.4 tons of glass and built strong community engagement through partnerships and public outreach.
- City of Omaha, Nebraska – $13K Awarded: Grant funds enabled the purchase of a 20 yard roll-off container and 3,000 residential totes to improve operational efficiency and expand participation. In 2025, glass collection increased 4 percent, reaching 1,692 tons and serving approximately 140,000 households.

Building on the momentum of 2025, GRF will open its next grant cycle on May 11, with applications due on July 10. The upcoming grant cycle will support projects that strengthen glass collection infrastructure. Eligible applicants include non-profit entities, municipalities, state and county governments, public waste management districts and private industries with a public partner.

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METALS

World crude steel production drops 6.5 percent

World crude steel production for the 69 countries reporting to the World Steel Association (worldsteel) was 147.3 million tonnes (Mt) in January 2026, a 6.5 percent decrease compared to January 2025.

Crude steel production by region

Africa produced 2.0 Mt in January 2026, up 5.8 percent on January 2025. Asia and Oceania produced 107.6 Mt, down 8.6 percent. The EU (27) produced 10.3 Mt, down 2.3 percent. Europe, Other produced 3.7 Mt, up 4.4 percent. The Middle East produced 4.8 Mt, up 12.6 percent. North America produced 9.2 Mt, down 0.6 percent. Russia & other CIS + Ukraine produced 6.5 Mt, down 8.6 percent. South America produced 3.4 Mt, down 1.2 percent.

Top 10 steel-producing countries

China is estimated to have produced 75.3 Mt in January 2026, down 13.9 percent on January 2025. India produced 15.1 Mt, up 10.5 percent. The United States produced 7.1 Mt, up 3.3 percent. Japan produced 6.8 Mt, down 0.5 percent. South Korea produced 5.6 Mt, up 5.0 percent. Russia is estimated to have produced 5.5 Mt, down 7.4 percent. Turkey produced 3.4 Mt, up 5.8 percent. Germany produced 3.1 Mt, up 15.0 percent. Brazil produced 2.7 Mt, down 1.4 percent. Iran produced 2.6 Mt, up 15.1 percent.

Top steel-producing countries

	Jan 2026 (Mt)	% change Jan 26/25	Jan-Jan 2026 (Mt)	% change Jan-Jan 26/25
China	75.3	-13.9	75.3	-13.9
India	15.1	10.5	15.1	10.5
United States	7.1	3.3	7.1	3.3
Japan	6.8	-0.5	6.8	-0.5
South Korea	5.6	5.0	5.6	5.0
Russia (e)	5.5	-7.4	5.5	-7.4
Turkey	3.4	5.8	3.4	5.8
Germany	3.1	15.0	3.1	15.0
Brazil	2.7	-1.4	2.7	-1.4
Iran	2.6	15.1	2.6	15.1

e-estimated. Ranking of top 10 producing countries based on year-to-date aggregate

Steel shipments up 1.7 percent

The American Iron and Steel Institute (AISI) reported that for the month of January 2026, U.S. steel mills shipped 7,583,826 net tons, a 1.7 percent increase from the 7,454,338 net tons shipped in December 2025, and a 2.0 percent increase from the 7,435,458 shipped in January 2025.

A comparison of January 2026 shipments to the month of January 2025 shows the following changes: corrosion resistant sheet and strip, up 11 percent, hot rolled sheet and strip, up 1 percent and cold rolled sheet, down 13 percent.

Wieland breaks ground on major expansion in Ohio

On January 15, 2026, Wieland officially broke ground at its Montpelier facility – Wieland Chase, the largest brass rod manufacturing company in North America – to build a new $27 million plant dedicated to expanding semi-finished brass and copper production exclusively in the U.S. Through this investment, designed to add additional capacity for ammunition ordnance wire manufacturing, Wieland becomes the first company to break ground in the United States since the Trump Administration took policy action to restore U.S. dominance in the semi-finished and finished copper product sector.

"This is more than just breaking ground on a building; it's about our commitment to American manufacturing," said Thomas Christie, president of Wieland Chase. "Our goal is to position Wieland Chase as a significant supplier of brass wire in North America and to expand Wieland's capabilities to service the full breadth of products to the ammunition market."

The groundbreaking event brought together company leaders, employees, company and economic development partners and elected officials to celebrate the 17,000 square-foot plant expansion. Wieland previously announced that initial operations of the multi-phase project will begin in Spring 2027, with the remaining phases wrapping up by 2031. The new expansion will broaden production capabilities and is expected to create 43 new, well-paying, manufacturing jobs in Williams County over time.

At the event, Christie further emphasized the company's workforce as a key factor in the decision to grow in Montpelier, Ohio. "Our team here in Northwest Ohio is exceptional, and this expansion is a testament to their skill, dedication and commitment to manufacturing excellence."

Wieland Chase began operations in Williams County in 1965, producing a single alloy and product. Over six decades, they have grown considerably to include forging and ingot production, two foundries and the capabilities to create more than 15 different alloys on site. As a significant employer in Northwest Ohio, Wieland Chase has invested heavily in Williams County over the years, further establishing this region as a prime manufacturing location.

The latest investment in Williams County follows Wieland's strategy to significantly expand its U.S. manufacturing capabilities. The company is currently investing approximately $600 million in East Alton, Illinois, to build the most advanced production facility for semi-finished copper products in North America. At the same time, Wieland is commissioning a state-of-the-art recycling center in Shelbyville, Kentucky, marking an important milestone in securing a reliable and sustainable domestic supply of critical copper products.

PLASTICS

PureCycle Technologies and TOPPAN partner to utilize recycled flexible film plastics

PureCycle Technologies, a U.S.-based company revolutionizing plastic recycling, and TOPPAN, a leader in packaging solutions, partnered to advance sustainability in flexible films and thermoformed packaging applications. The collaboration addresses growing brand owner demand for high-quality recycled content to meet emerging regulatory requirements worldwide.

Through this partnership, PureCycle and TOPPAN have successfully developed and produced a snack bar wrapper containing more than 30 percent recycled content, demonstrating the performance capabilities of PureCycle's PureFive® resin in demanding flexible packaging applications. The wrapper showcases the printability and functionality needed by the world's leading snack brands while significantly reducing environmental impact.

"The path forward for flexible packaging sustainability is one where food safety, regulatory compliance, performance and environmental responsibility advance together, not in competition with one another," said Astrid Torres, Sr. sustainability manager, TOPPAN Packaging Americas. "Through our partnership with PureCycle, we're advancing solutions that foster a society focused on well-being and sustainability while safeguarding our planet for future generations. The snack bar wrapper we've developed showcases the printability and performance that leading brands demand, while incorporating meaningful recycled content. This is exactly the kind of packaging innovation needed to build a truly circular economy."

Building on this success, the companies are now targeting multiple thermoforming applications where major brand owners are seeking recycled content solutions to comply with upcoming mandates. PureCycle's portfolio of PureFive resin includes multiple grades that have been specifically designed for thermoformed applications including snack cups, microwaveable containers, and other food-contact packaging formats.

PureCycle's innovative dissolution recycling process transforms post-consumer polypropylene packaging into virgin-like PureFive resin, removing colors, odors, additives and contaminants that limit traditionally recycled material. The resulting resin meets FDA standards for food-contact applications and performs similarly to virgin resin, enabling seamless integration into existing manufacturing processes.

Charter Next Generation joins the US Flexible Film Initiative

Charter Next Generation (CNG), a provider of sustainable material science solutions, has joined the US Flexible Film Initiative (USFFI) as an associate member, becoming only the second non-consumer packaged goods (CPG) company to join the organization. CNG's membership will expand the pursuit of its goals that are consistent with USFFI's mission to create scalable, circular solutions for the recycling of flexible films in the United States.

USFFI is a 501(c)(6) nonprofit membership organization formed by leading brands and organizations individually dedicated to demonstrating that flexible packaging, including bags, wraps and pouches, can be successfully sorted, processed, and reintroduced into the supply chain when the necessary economic incentives and infrastructure are in place.

CNG's association with USFFI reflects the company's commitment to advancing sustainable, innovative material solutions and strengthening circular pathways for flexible films. This membership aligns with CNG's broader strategy to be a leading demand generator for post-consumer recycled (PCR) content through our award-winning portfolio of sustainable solutions, leveraged by many of the top 100 CPGs in the U.S. today.

As an associate member, CNG will contribute sustainable film design expertise and collaborate to strengthen material recovery systems and domestic end markets for recycled films. Its GreenArrow™ sustainable film portfolio advances recycle-ready and increased post-consumer recycled (PCR) content, supporting customers in meeting evolving sustainability and regulatory demands.

Foam recycling now available in Cumberland County, North Carolina

Cumberland County, North Carolina, the fifth-most populous county in the state with over 336,000 residents, received a $50,000 grant from the Foodservice Packaging Institute's Foam Recycling Coalition (FRC). The grant enables the recycling of foam polystyrene (PS), including items such as cups, plates, bowls, take-out containers, egg cartons and block packaging foam.

The FRC grant assisted with funding the purchase and installation of a foam densifier, used to compact foam products into foam blocks or ingots. The foam ingots will be sold to processors and manufactured into architectural molding and picture frames.

The foam densifier was installed at the Ann Street Landfill site located in Fayetteville. Residents can take their recyclables, including foam PS, to the Ann Street location or any of the county's 16 container sites.

"This grant expands recycling opportunities for our residents while helping Cumberland County reduce waste and recover valuable materials," said Amanda Lee, Cumberland County general manager of Natural Resources. "It's a practical, community-driven step toward a more sustainable future."

The county has developed an outreach campaign to inform residents of foam recycling, including those in the communities of Fort Bragg, Fayetteville, Falcon, Eastover, Godwin, Hope Mills, Linden, Spring Lake, Stedmann and Wade. They are also working with county-operated building staff to separate foodservice trays and containers for recycling.

The grant is made possible through contributions to FRC, which focuses exclusively on increased recycling of post-consumer foam polystyrene. Its members include Americas Styrenics; Chick-fil-A; CKF Inc.; Dart Container Corp.; Dyne-A-Pak; Genpak; INEOS Styrolution America LLC; Novolex; and Republic Plastics.

Washington confirms Interchange 360 as compliance pathway under Recycling Reform Act

Interchange 360, a nonprofit, industry-led Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO), announced that the Washington Department of Ecology has confirmed Interchange 360 as the entity intending to operate an Alternative Collection Program (ACP) on behalf of participating producers under the state's Recycling Reform Act (RRA).

The confirmation establishes Interchange 360 as a compliance pathway for producers of lubricant, petroleum and automotive packaging as Washington begins implementing its new Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework, marking one of the first specialized collection programs recognized under the state's recycling reform law.

An ACP is intended for material streams that require dedicated infrastructure or handling processes that differ from typical household packaging recycling. When materials can contain residual product, require specialized transport or rely on sector-specific recovery systems, regulators may approve an ACP to support safe collection and effective recycling outcomes.

Washington's Recycling Reform Act, signed into law in 2025, established a statewide EPR program for residential packaging and paper products. The law requires producers that introduce packaging into the state to finance and manage end-of-life recycling systems through approved compliance structures overseen by the Washington Department of Ecology. The program is part of a growing national shift toward producer-funded recycling systems intended to expand recycling access, improve recovery rates, and modernize waste management infrastructure.

Washington officials have also selected Circular Action Alliance as the PRO responsible for implementing the state's broader packaging EPR program.

Interchange 360 plans to develop and operate the program in Washington, tailored to the handling, recovery and recycling needs of petroleum and automotive packaging.

PLASTICS

PLASTICS economic analysis details state-by-state jobs and export impact

The Plastics Industry Association (PLASTICS) chief economist, Dr. Perc Pineda, released a new economic analysis examining how shifts in U.S. trade and tariff policy are shaping the plastics sector's economic footprint. The analysis highlights the industry's $550.1 billion in shipments, more than 1.7 million American jobs supported, and over $78 billion in exports, with a state-by-state breakdown of employment and export activity.

Dr. Pineda wrote, "Taken together, these data illustrate the breadth and depth of the U.S. plastics industry's impact – both domestically and internationally. The industry not only provides over 1.7 million direct and supplier-supported jobs but also drives hundreds of thousands of additional positions through exports and related economic activity. States contribute in different ways, whether through production, strategic logistics or access to key export markets such as Mexico. Understanding these dynamics underscores the importance of supporting the plastics supply chain, trade policies that enable competitiveness, and investments that strengthen U.S. manufacturing for sustained employment and economic growth."

Study reveals robust polystyrene recycling infrastructure across North America

The Polystyrene Recycling Alliance (PSRA), a North American coalition advancing scalable polystyrene recycling solutions, released a comprehensive study examining end-market landscapes and recovery pathways for four major polystyrene resin types across the United States and Canada. Conducted in partnership with Resource Recycling Systems (RRS), the study includes primary interviews and a vetted facility catalog to develop a national inventory of companies receiving, processing, and reclaiming different forms of polystyrene across North America.

Overall, the study identified 126 companies operating a total of 169 facilities across 30 U.S. states and 4 Canadian provinces that are either actively receiving, processing or reclaiming some form of polystyrene, including general purpose polystyrene (GPPS), high impact polystyrene (HIPS), expanded polystyrene (EPS) and extruded polystyrene (XPS). The research reveals there is established recycling infrastructure for recovering all forms of polystyrene and is positioned for continued growth with appropriate interventions.

The study reveals significant maturity in recovery systems for EPS and XPS within commercial business-to-business supply chains. Researchers identified 81 companies handling recovered EPS and/or XPS, representing a total of 119 facilities across 30 U.S. states and four Canadian provinces, with more than half operating as manufacturing end markets using recycled feedstock. Today, more than 700 drop-off locations support EPS collection across North America. Recovery pathways include manufacturer take-back programs, self-backhaul through distribution centers, and deployment of densification equipment at construction and retail sites.

For GPPS and HIPS, the research identified 45 companies across 22 U.S. states and 4 Canadian provinces handling these recovered materials, with approximately 13 percent representing manufacturing end markets using recycled feedstock. Medical plastics currently dominate post-use streams being reclaimed as post-consumer recycled content, alongside electronics captured through specialized e-waste programs. The study underscores the dual need to build reliable demand for post-consumer recycled GPPS and HIPS and expand consistent post-use supply streams through partnerships with plastic recovery facilities (PRFs), MRF operators and chemical recyclers.

"The polystyrene industry is committed to accelerating recycling and recognizes that robust end markets are essential to enabling a circular economy," said Justin Riney, chair of the Polystyrene Recycling Alliance. "This study provides the critical insights and data we need to have a fact-based discussion with stakeholders and inform strategic investments in the collection and recovery infrastructure."

At its core, the study emphasizes building reliable demand signals that encourage investment in reclamation infrastructure and establishing dependable supply chains through partnerships with plastic recovery facility operators and chemical recyclers.

"The research conducted by RRS provides a comprehensive picture of the current state of polystyrene recycling in the United States and Canada, demonstrating that different degrees of infrastructure exist to support a circular economy for polystyrene," said Anne Johnson, vice president and principal at Resource Recycling Systems. "Our findings show that with strategic investments in collection and continued growth in market demand, the Polystyrene Recycling Alliance and its members can significantly expand polystyrene recovery rates."

This framework reinforces PSRA's central focus on enabling scalable, market-driven recovery pathways for polystyrene across North America.

WASTE

SWACO expands community investment to make waste reduction easier

The Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO) plans to make new investments in four initiatives to make waste reduction easier for families and residents. The expanded projects focus on food waste, specialized recycling and data collection.

"Reducing waste shouldn't feel overwhelming or out of reach," said SWACO executive director Joe Lombardi. "By expanding these programs and forging key community partnerships, we're making it easier for families and businesses to recycle more, waste less, and see real savings – whether that's keeping food out of the landfill, recycling hard-to-manage items, or improving access to data that drive smarter decisions. It's fun to start the year on a high note thinking of the great impact that's to come in the next 12 months and beyond."

Food Waste Expansion Program

The city of Reynoldsburg has recently opened a new food waste drop-off site at Huber Park after becoming the first central Ohio community to complete SWACO's Food Waste Expansion Program. Residents can drop off food waste at no charge during operating hours, and free at-home collection bins will be provided to the first 100 households that register.

With the new Reynoldsburg location, there are now more than 35 food waste drop off sites in Franklin County. The Food Waste Expansion Program provides participants, like Reynoldsburg, up to $4,000 to build their food scrap collection site enclosure, purchase signage and pay for the first year of hauling for the collected scraps.

"This new food waste drop-off site gives Reynoldsburg residents a simple, convenient way to keep food scraps out of the landfill and save residents money, and we couldn't have done it without SWACO's support," said Mayor Joe Begeny. "We're also pairing this access with education. I'm excited to see the impact this program will have on our community."

Nearly one million pounds of wasted food arrives at the Franklin County Sanitary Landfill every single day.

A study in the American Journal of Agricultural Economics found the average family in America wastes more than 2,400 pounds of food per year. That is an average of nearly $2,000 each year literally thrown in the trash. When families prevent food waste, they save more than food.

Drop-off sites are a key part of SWACO's Save More Than Food Campaign, which aims to reduce food waste in central Ohio by 50 percent by 2030.

Worthington Special Assistance Support

SWACO awarded the City of Worthington a grant for nearly $30,000 to create a recycling convenience center. The new center will be able to accept hard-to-recycle items like car batteries, old motor oil, antifreeze, electronics, food waste and Styrofoam.

Worthington's convenience center will be located at the City's Highland Road Complex and is expected to open this Spring. The grant supports SWACO's Greenprint Initiative, which seeks to form new partnerships to capture more hard-to-recycle materials. The opening of this convenience center later this year will expand the availability of these centers to four in central Ohio. SWACO currently operates the recycling convenience center on Jackson Pike and the City of Columbus has two waste and reuse convenience centers.

Cart Grant Program

SWACO will contribute more than $400,000 to help the city of Groveport, Madison, Clinton and Sharon Townships upgrade their recycling capacity.

SWACO will help provide more than 8,000 new recycling carts. The 35 or 65 gallon carts will more than double what residents can recycle in a given week. The recycling carts will also have lids to prevent litter, and the wheels will make it easier to get recycled items to the curb for pickup.

New Capture Rate Research Studies

SWACO conducted the third in a series of capture rate studies. This research determines how many recyclable items reach a recycling center versus a landfill. The study involved sorting items collected through curbside recycling programs in two central Ohio communities at SWACO's Jackson Pike transfer station. This will help SWACO see where recycling efforts are succeeding and where more advanced community education may be needed.

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WASTE

SWANA and EREF sign MOU to advance education in waste management

The Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) and the Environmental Research & Education Foundation (EREF) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU formalizes collaboration between the two organizations to advance research, education and awareness in the solid waste and resource management sector.

Areas of collaboration may include developing educational resources and advancing research, reciprocal participation in events and coordination on opportunities of mutual interest that strengthen industry understanding and best practices. EREF will add public sector representation to its Research Council by selecting a municipality to serve, based on recommendations from SWANA.

"This agreement builds on a long-standing collaboration between our organizations," shared SWANA chief executive officer Amy Lestition Burke. "It provides a framework to strengthen our work, supporting knowledge-sharing and professional development for industry professionals. Importantly, it also ensures that public sector perspectives are represented in research discussions, helping to align scientific inquiry with the real-world challenges faced by municipalities and the communities they serve."

The new MOU brings together SWANA's broad professional membership with EREF's focus on research to expand the impact and reach of research findings, educational programming, and industry engagement.

Royal Waste Services expands Mack LR Electric Fleet

Mack Trucks shared that Royal Waste Services, Inc., a Waste Connections subsidiary, has ordered three additional Mack® LR Electric refuse trucks, funded through the New York Truck Voucher Incentive Program (NYTVIP). The order follows the company's initial LR Electric deployment in December 2025, where the vehicle accumulated over 500 miles and collected 600 tons of municipal solid waste – all with zero downtime.

NYTVIP is administered by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) and provides vouchers to fleets across New York State that purchase or lease zero-tailpipe emission battery-electric or hydrogen fuel-cell electric vehicles. The program supports the state's goal of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and improving air quality, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

In its first eight weeks of operation, Royal Waste Services' initial LR Electric demonstrated strong reliability and efficiency, collecting approximately 75 tons of waste per week while maintaining 100 percent uptime. Drivers have reported reduced fatigue due to the absence of engine vibration, along with improved control and responsiveness compared with traditional diesel units on stop-and-go collection routes.

"After seeing positive results with our initial Mack LR Electric, and with the support from the voucher incentive program, adding three more units was a natural next step for our fleet," said Michael Angelo Reali, district manager for Royal Waste Services. "The move to electric propulsion delivers environmental and community benefits, enhances driver comfort and provides fuel and maintenance cost savings."

Royal Waste Services received its first Mack LR Electric in early 2025 as part of "The Bronx Is Breathing" initiative, a project funded through the New York Clean Transportation Prizes program.

The LR Electric is easily recognizable by its copper-colored Bulldog on the cab, denoting the all-electric powertrain. The vehicle offers the same driver and passenger side configurations and customization options as the diesel-powered Mack LR model.

ReSource Waste Services acquires C.L. Noonan Container Service

ReSource Waste Services LLC (ReSource) has acquired C.L. Noonan Container Service, Inc., a West Bridgewater, Massachusetts based roll-off container and hauling provider serving commercial, industrial and construction customers throughout Eastern New England since its inception in 1997. ReSource, through the investment it made in Northeast Recycling LLC (Northeast) in January 2024, continues to grow its responsive and customer-centered construction and demolition debris (C&D) hauling operations throughout Eastern New England.

This acquisition significantly strengthens Northeast's service footprint, fleet capacity and ability to support customers with dependable waste and recycling solutions. By combining C.L. Noonan's established customer relationships and operational expertise with Northeast's infrastructure and scale, customers will benefit from expanded resources while maintaining the high-touch service.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Can Manufacturers Institute appoints Sharif as director of sustainability

Can Manufacturers Institute (CMI) president Scott Breen announced that Roxanne Sharif joined the association as director of sustainability.

Sharif brings proven expertise as a corporate sustainability leader, supporting Fortune 500 companies in developing and executing sustainability strategies, data systems and reporting programs. She has worked with organizations including the Nasdaq and U.S. Green Building Council, contributing to research, disclosure guidance and other climate and sustainability related initiatives. Most recently, she has contributed to statewide research assessing recycling system readiness in Tennessee, evaluating infrastructure capacity, access to recycling services and material recovery challenges to help inform future program design.

Previously, Sharif served as the director of sustainability for Mohawk Group, where she partnered with product engineering, procurement, operations, sales and audit teams to advance product stewardship, material transparency, and compliance-ready sustainability programs. Her work included developing governance frameworks, managing environmental, social and governance (ESG) data and disclosures, and supporting initiatives related to materials management, water stewardship and greenhouse gas emissions reductions – experience that closely aligns with advancing credible sustainability outcomes in complex manufacturing environments.

In her role at CMI, Sharif leads the association's non-policy sustainability initiatives, guiding research, on-the-ground activations and cross-sector collaborations across the metal can's value chain. Her work focuses on increasing recycling rates for all metal can types, strengthening the metal can's leading sustainability performance and advancing high-impact programs that reinforce metal packaging's role in a domestic, resilient circular economy. She serves as a primary sustainability resource to CMI members and external partners, represents the association publicly and helps build consensus.

Nucor executive vice president Dan Needham to retire

Nucor Corporation announced that Daniel R. Needham, executive vice president of commercial, plans to retire effective June 20, 2026.

Needham joined Nucor in 2000 as controller at Nucor Steel Hertford County and subsequently served as controller of Nucor Steel Decatur, LLC and Nucor Steel Utah. He later served as general manager of Nucor Steel Connecticut, Inc., Nucor Steel Utah and Nucor Steel Indiana. He was promoted to vice president in 2016 and to executive vice president in 2021.

Reworld appoints Mauro Gregorio to its board of directors

Reworld™, has appointed Mauro Gregorio to its board of directors. A long-time executive at Dow Inc. with extensive global leadership and board experience, Gregorio brings a proven track record of supporting growth, strengthening operations and creating long-term value within complex, asset-intensive industries.

Gregorio most recently served as president of Dow's Performance Materials & Coatings division, with annual sales of approximately $10 billion, delivering material science solutions for infrastructure, transportation, renewable energy, electronics and consumer markets. Earlier in his career, Gregorio held several senior leadership roles spanning more than two decades, including President of Dow Consumer Solutions and Chief Executive Officer of Dow Silicone Corporation where he led the integration of Dow Corning following its acquisition by Dow Chemical.

In addition to his executive leadership background, Gregorio has served on the boards of several public and private companies.

Brian Clifford appointed deputy commissioner for Bureau of Conservation

Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation commissioner David W. Salyers has appointed Brian Clifford as deputy commissioner for the Bureau of Conservation.

A long serving leader in the department, Clifford served most recently as the first ever director of the Office of Outdoor Recreation and has been recognized for his guidance in the office's formation in 2024 as a priority of Gov. Bill Lee. Since its creation, Clifford has helped build the Office of Outdoor Recreation into one of the strongest programs of its kind in the nation, with a particular focus on expanding access to the outdoors.

Clifford has been instrumental in advancing BluewaysTN, an initiative to increase recreational waterways in Tennessee. He has played a key role in the department's involvement with the Governor's Annual Rural Opportunity Summit, helping highlight the importance of outdoor recreation, conservation, and natural resources as drivers of opportunity and quality of life in rural Tennessee. Clifford is also a founding member of the Tennessee Outdoor Partnership through which he has brought together public, private and nonprofit partners to support conservation, access, and outdoor recreation across the state.

Before joining TDEC, Clifford was a practicing attorney in Nashville with the firms Littler and Waller Lansden Dortch and Davis LLP. He earned a bachelor's degree from Middle Tennessee State University and law degree from the University of Tennessee.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

PRC appoints new executive director

Pennsylvania Resources Council (PRC), the Commonwealth's oldest grassroots environmental organization, has appointed Sarah Alessio Shea as executive director following the recent announcement by Darren Spielman that he will depart from this role by year's end. Shea will coordinate with Spielman as she transitions into this new role over the next several months.

The appointment establishes Shea – who possesses two decades of experience with PRC and currently serves as its deputy director – as leader of the statewide nonprofit organization nationally recognized for its expertise in recycling and waste reduction.

As executive director of PRC, Shea will oversee statewide public and private partnerships focused on education, material collection/recycling, watershed protection, and litter prevention, and she will supervise staff members based in regional offices in Allegheny County and Delaware County.

During her 20 year tenure, Shea has coordinated PRC's hard-to-recycle and household chemical collections, managing more than 70 events that have served 35,000+ residents and diverted 3.4 million pounds of material from landfills. She also led the development of PRC's Act 101 White Paper, published in 2021, advancing statewide recycling policy.

Since assuming the deputy director position in 2021, Shea has overseen PRC's staff and programs across Pennsylvania, ensuring effective implementation of environmental initiatives. She has secured grant funding from government agencies and private foundations, building lasting relationships that have strengthened PRC's capacity and expanded programs in recycling, waste diversion, and environmental education.

Republic Services appoints Ian Craig to board of directors

Republic Services, Inc. announced that Ian Craig has been appointed to its board of directors. The company's board now consists of 13 members, including 12 independent directors.

Craig, currently serves as chief executive officer of Coca-Cola FEMSA, Latin America's largest bottling company, operating in 10 countries with $16 billion in annual revenue and a market capitalization of $23 billion. Under Craig's leadership, Coca-Cola FEMSA has accelerated its digital transformation and sustainability initiatives, including driving renewable energy use in its plants and implementing impactful plastic bottle collection programs.

Prior to becoming chief executive officer in 2023, Craig held numerous leadership positions at Coca-Cola FEMSA including chief operating officer for Brazil and Argentina, and various financial leadership roles. Throughout his career, he has demonstrated expertise in strategic growth, having led more than $7 billion in mergers and acquisitions across Latin America.

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Navigating metal shredder safety challenges

by MAURA KELLER
mkeller@americanrecycler.com

Metal shredding has long been one of the most powerful – and potentially hazardous – processes within the recycling industry. Massive rotating hammers, high-torque shafts and heavy-duty conveyors transform scrap into valuable secondary raw materials. But as the composition of waste streams evolves, so too do the risks facing operators.

Today, one of the most pressing safety challenges isn't the machinery itself. It's what's hidden inside the scrap.

From lithium-ion batteries embedded in electronic devices to pressurized cylinders and hazardous waste mixed with metal, contamination has emerged as the defining safety issue for shredding facilities. According to Emily Sherman, marketing manager at Shred Station, the scale and complexity of these threats have increased dramatically over the past decade.

"The most significant safety challenge today is unforeseen contamination, with unexpected materials received," Sherman said. "Scrap metals especially have a high risk of hidden hazards – lithium-ion batteries, unexpected hazardous waste mixed with scrap metal, pressurized cylinders, flammables, and sometimes even things like needles."

When these materials slip into the shredding stream, the consequences can be immediate and severe. Fires, explosions, equipment damage and employee injury are all real possibilities.

"If these hazards aren't identified before items enter the shredder, there is a real risk of injury to people and plant," Sherman said.

Ironically, this escalation is occurring despite technological progress. Modern facilities now feature advanced fire suppression systems, better safeguards and more upstream material controls than were commonplace 10 years ago. Yet contamination levels continue to climb.

"Today, despite better technology, fire suppression systems, more thorough safeguards, and upstream material controls that maybe weren't as commonplace 10 years ago, contamination is the highest it has ever been," Sherman noted.

Several factors may be contributing. The overall volume of materials entering recycling streams has increased. Meanwhile, as more products incorporate batteries and electronics, even everyday items can pose unexpected hazards. Sherman also pointed to knowledge gaps at the point of disposal.

"This could be because the volume of materials being recycled is generally higher, or even because those sorting waste at customer premises may not have the level of knowledge needed to correctly identify hazardous materials and organize proper waste disposal for hazardous items," she said.

To help address that issue, Shred Station provides awareness materials to customers, aiming to reduce contamination before materials ever reach its facilities.

The Lithium-Ion Threat

Among all contaminants, lithium-ion batteries present the most acute and rapidly growing risk.

"All batteries are a concern, but lithium-ion batteries are especially dangerous because they have a higher energy density," Sherman explained. "If crushed or punctured, they can quickly burst into flames."

Inside a shredder, crushing and puncturing are inevitable. The violent mechanical action that breaks down scrap metal will almost certainly damage any battery hidden within it.

"Lithium-ion fires can become very hot very quickly and, naturally, placed into a shredder, damage to batteries is essentially guaranteed," she said.

The growing presence of batteries in recycling streams reflects broader shifts in consumer electronics and e-waste disposal. Ambarish Mitra, co-founder of Greyparrot, said facilities across the recycling sector are seeing a significant increase in battery-powered devices entering metal and mixed waste streams.

"Metal shredding facilities are seeing a surge in e-waste entering their streams, and the batteries inside those devices are quickly becoming one of the biggest safety hazards in modern recycling operations," Mitra said. Data from Greyparrot's waste analytics systems indicates the share of metals in residue streams at municipal recycling facilities rose from 2.5 percent to 4.3 percent last year as discarded electronics increased. "That trend means more batteries entering facilities that were never designed to safely process them."

When hazardous materials slip into the shredding stream, the consequences can be immediate and severe. Fires, explosions, equipment damage and employee injury are all real possibilities.

When a battery's internal structure is compromised, it can trigger thermal runaway, a chemical reaction that rapidly releases heat and energy. "When a lithium battery is damaged, it can reach temperatures above 1,000 degrees Celsius," Mitra said. "In a mixed waste stream filled with plastics, paper and other combustible materials, those conditions can quickly escalate into fires that are extremely difficult to contain."

Compounding the danger is the environment inside many shredding facilities. Fine particulate matter, including paper dust when mixed waste is processed, can act as fuel.

"If other materials are shredded on-site, like paper, there is likely going to be paper dust in the air, which can also ignite and become out of control very quickly," Sherman warned. "Fire suppression systems and effective dust management systems are essential for this reason."

Lithium-ion battery fires are notoriously difficult to extinguish. They can reignite even after appearing to be under control, making rapid detection and comprehensive suppression systems critical.

When Batteries Slip Through

The problem is not hypothetical. Sherman said batteries are encountered "on a regular basis" within incoming waste streams – a reflection of broader industry-wide challenges tied to improper disposal of battery-powered devices and loose batteries.

Mitra said the scale of the challenge becomes clearer when facilities examine waste streams more closely. According to Greyparrot's AI monitoring systems, batteries appear with surprising frequency in recycling operations.

"Our AI waste analytics systems typically detect one battery for every 2.4 tons of material at U.S. recycling facilities," Mitra said. "That can mean roughly 11 batteries per hour on a single infeed line. When you start looking at the numbers that way, you begin to understand the scale of the risk operators are facing."

In fixed-site facilities, the most common outcome is a minor ignition event triggered by battery rupture during shredding. "In rare cases, this can produce a small explosion and potentially

See METAL SHREDDER, Page B2

Metal Shredder

■ Continued from Page B1

ignite surrounding paper material," Sherman said.

Fortunately, integrated fire detection and automatic suppression systems play a crucial role in limiting damage.

"All shredding equipment across our facilities is fitted with integrated fire detection and automatic fire suppression systems, which immediately deploy water to contain and extinguish any ignition," she said. "These systems are routinely maintained and tested to ensure operational effectiveness."

Mobile shredding operations face similar risks.

"Batteries occasionally enter our mobile shredding vehicles," Sherman noted. "In such instances, the most common outcome is localized smoldering within the shredder unit."

Even localized events require careful handling. "As part of our strict safety protocols, the fire brigade is contacted due to the drivers not being allowed to open the rear doors as this then adds oxygen into the smoulder," she explained.

Across Shred Station's operations, external fire service attendance is required approximately four to five times per year – a sobering statistic that underscores how persistent the battery challenge has become.

Continuous Prevention

For confidential shredding providers like Shred Station, safety protocols must be carefully balanced with data protection requirements. Manual sorting of customer materials is limited to avoid breaching confidentiality.

"We have implemented a range of operational controls designed to minimize the risk of batteries entering the shredding process, while maintaining the strict confidentiality standards that underpin our service," Sherman said.

Staff training is the first line of defense. "All operational personnel are trained to recognize battery-containing devices and high-risk waste streams," she explained.

Training emphasizes vigilance during collection and handling without compromising the confidentiality of client materials. Controlled visual inspections also play a role. While materials are not manually sorted in detail, operatives conduct proportionate visual checks at collection, unloading and before feeding material into the shredder to identify obvious non-paper items or prohibited materials.

Container design provides another safeguard. "Our containers are supplied as secure waste paper bins with restricted paper-entry slots," Sherman said. "This design supports correct usage by limiting the insertion of larger non-paper items. And where batteries or battery-containing devices are visibly identified, they are immediately removed and segregated for compliant disposal."

The Role of Detection Technology

As contamination becomes more prevalent, detection systems must also become more advanced. Emerging technologies – including thermal imaging, AI-powered sorting and sensor-based screening – are helping facilities identify hazards earlier and more accurately.

"Detection technologies help because they are more effective than the human eye, give early warning, and can detect a range of hazards very quickly," Sherman said.

Artificial intelligence is playing a growing role in identifying battery-related risks within recycling streams. According to Mitra, AI waste analytics systems can be trained to recognize objects that likely contain lithium batteries and track them as materials move through a facility.

"AI systems can identify products that typically contain batteries and provide operators with far better visibility into the risks entering their systems," Mitra said. Even when batteries are hidden inside devices, visual analytics can flag those items and alert operators before they reach critical equipment.

However, Mitra emphasized that AI is most effective when paired with complementary detection tools.

"AI alone isn't a silver bullet," he said. "The most effective approach combines visual AI detection with complementary technologies such as thermal imaging or X-ray sensors."

In this layered approach, AI monitors the entire waste stream for likely battery-containing devices while secondary sensors detect concealed batteries or early signs of overheating.

"Together, these tools give operators a much clearer picture of where the risks are and how to mitigate them before they turn into fires," Mitra said.

Thermal imaging cameras can identify hotspots that may indicate smoldering batteries before visible flames appear. Sensor arrays can detect chemical signatures associated with certain hazards. These tools don't eliminate risk, but they provide critical seconds or minutes that can prevent a small ignition from becoming a catastrophic fire.

What Comes Next?

As electrification accelerates and battery-powered products proliferate, shredding facilities will continue to face increasing risk from embedded energy sources. Looking ahead, Sherman believes upstream solutions will be essential.

"Better upstream controls such as better labelling and disposal advice, as well as extended producer responsibility in rolling out more consistent battery take-back schemes," she said, will be critical steps.

Stronger enforcement against improper disposal could also help reduce the number of batteries entering general waste streams. Collaboration across the industry will be equally important.

"The industry would also benefit from data sharing, with opportunities to learn from incidents and best practices used across operators, insurance providers, fire services and battery manufacturers," Sherman said.

As industry experts emphasize, long-term solutions will depend on improvements throughout the entire recycling chain – from consumer disposal practices to advanced detection systems inside recycling plants.

Acerinox reports 2025 fiscal year results

Acerinox has closed the fiscal year 2025 with an adjusted EBITDA of €422 million and a sales margin of 7 percent, demonstrating the Group's structural resilience in a complex macroeconomic environment with low global demand. Despite volatility and price pressure, the Group has demonstrated the strength of its diversified business model.

One of the highlights of the fiscal year is the Group's excellent liquidity management. Operating cash flow amounted to €455 million, 55 percent higher than in 2024. This milestone is a direct consequence of a contingency plan for working capital, which was reduced by €406 million, driven primarily by an inventory optimization of €383 million.

Net financial debt amounted to €1.2 billion, representing a marginal increase of only €68 million compared to the previous year, despite the intense pace of investments (CAPEX of €311 million) and the depreciation of the US dollar against the euro.

First full year after the purchase of Haynes

The year 2025 has been the first full fiscal year following the acquisition of Haynes International in November 2024. Its rapid adaptation has confirmed the strategic success of the operation, providing added value and diversification into higher-margin sectors such as aerospace. Thanks to this incorporation, the high-performance alloys division obtained EBITDA of €135 million (+15 percent), mitigating the slowdown in sectors such as oil & gas, and the chemical processing industry.

Synergies achieved during the year amounted to $12 million, in line with projections.

The net result, with losses of €40 million, was affected by extraordinary items that did not involve cash outflows, such as an inventory adjustment of €60 million and a provision of €9 million for Acerinox Europa's Staff Rejuvenation Plan, in addition to an impairment of tax credits of €48 million applied in June of 2025.

In 2025, the company maintained its dividend policy that has been consolidated over recent years, distributing a total of €155 million in dividends (€0.62 per share).

Positive trend in 2026

Acerinox entered 2026 with an outlook of gradual growth. The company estimates that this fiscal year will show an improving trend, supported by both the improvement in market conditions and the strengthening of the European regulatory framework.

"We are confident that the new regulatory measures being adopted by the EU will mark a necessary and decisive cycle shift in the sector", said Bernardo Velázquez, chief executive officer of Acerinox. "Despite caution regarding short-term European demand, Acerinox now has a more solid competitive foundation thanks to new trade measures, that should be approved as soon as possible, and the CBAM, tools that will act as catalysts for local business by curbing unfair competition from imports. While we do not control economic cycles, we have the ideal industrial model to capture maximum value as soon as the market improves", he added.

Finished import market share estimated at 15 percent in January

Based on the Commerce Department's most recent Steel Import Monitoring and Analysis (SIMA) data, the American Iron and Steel Institute (AISI) reported that steel import permit applications for the month of January totaled 1,568,000 net tons (NT)*. This was a 6.4 percent decrease from the 1,675,000 permit tons recorded in December and a 0.6 percent decrease from the December final imports total of 1,577,000. Import permit tonnage for finished steel in January was 1,216,000, up 4.8 percent from the final imports total of 1,160,000 in December. The estimated finished steel import market share in January was 15 percent.

Steel imports with large increases in January permits vs. the December final imports include sheets and strip all other metallic coated (up 47 percent), reinforcing bars (up 44 percent), cold rolled sheets (up 43 percent), hot rolled sheets (up 28 percent) and standard pipe (up 22 percent).

In January, the largest steel import permit applications were for South Korea (241,000 NT, up 45 percent vs. December final), Canada (221,000 NT, down 5 percent), Mexico (220,000 NT, up 61 percent), Brazil (185,000 NT, down 28 percent) and Turkey (81,000 NT, up 17 percent).

*Note that import permits data are counts of tonnages requested in applications for licenses to import steel mill products and are not actual import volumes. For a number of reasons, permit tonnages may understate or overstate actual import volumes for the month.

Nucor promotes Sullivan to CFO

Nucor Corporation announced that John L. "Jack" Sullivan, vice president, treasurer and general manager of investor relations, was promoted to chief financial officer, treasurer and executive vice president. He will succeed Steve Laxton, who was promoted to president and chief operating officer effective January 1, 2026.

Sullivan began his career with Nucor in 2022 as general manager of investor relations and was promoted to his current role in 2025. Sullivan previously worked for Duke Energy for 13 years, holding positions of increasing responsibility across treasury, corporate development and investor relations. Prior to joining Duke Energy, he spent nine years in corporate and investment banking at Bank of America. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a Master of Business Administration from Wake Forest University.

AR Scrap Metals MarketWatch

Commodity		Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4	Zone 5
FERROUS						
#1 Bushelings	per gross ton	$413.00	$410.00	$412.00	$410.00	$412.00
#1 Bundles	per gross ton	392.00	389.00	390.00	390.00	391.00
Structural	per gross ton	359.00	354.00	360.00	362.00	364.00
#1 & #2 Mixed Steel	per gross ton	290.00	291.00	293.00	292.00	290.00
Crushed Auto Bodies	per gross ton	206.00	212.00	210.00	213.00	212.00
Shredded Auto Scrap	per gross ton	405.00	403.00	406.00	405.00	412.00
NON FERROUS						
#1 Copper Bare Bright	per pound	5.95	5.50	5.43	5.25	5.46
#2 Copper Wire & Tubing	per pound	5.75	5.30	5.23	5.10	5.15
Aluminum Cans	per pound	.91	.92	.94	.95	.98
Al/Cu Radiators	per pound	2.75	2.73	2.74	2.75	2.79
Aluminum Radiators	per pound	.55	.53	.47	.45	.45
Heater Cores	per pound	1.35	1.30	1.28	1.29	1.30
Stainless Steel	per pound	.65	.62	.64	.64	.63

All prices are expressed in USD. Printed as a reader service only.

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EQUIPMENT SPOTLIGHT

Magnets

The recycling industry demand for powerful magnets and industrial magnetic separation products remains high and the type most often used is the electromagnet. The magnetic field involved can be activated or deactivated and at the recycling starting point, where the initial sorting of a materials load may commence, load lifting magnets may be the best magnet type to use.

Regardless of the practices involved, strong neodymium magnets are needed, either in the form of magnetic plates, rollers or drums. All can be manufactured to spec, to meet the exact requirements an end user may outline. The capabilities and products offered by the companies that follow can meet a wide range of tasks that recyclers may need to execute.

Bunting's Stainless Steel Separation Conveyor, known as the SSSC, is engineered to recover stainless steel from demanding recycling streams, including general recycling, auto shredder residue and wire chopping operations. The system uses a patented magnetic circuit design with high-intensity neodymium magnets to improve separation across a broad range of material sizes.

The SSSC is capable of recovering up to 98 percent of small and mid-fraction 300 series stainless steel and up to 94 percent of large-fraction stainless steel from ASR zurik lines. It also removes stainless steel and ferrous dust from wire fractions, producing a cleaner zurik product and improving overall scrap recovery value.

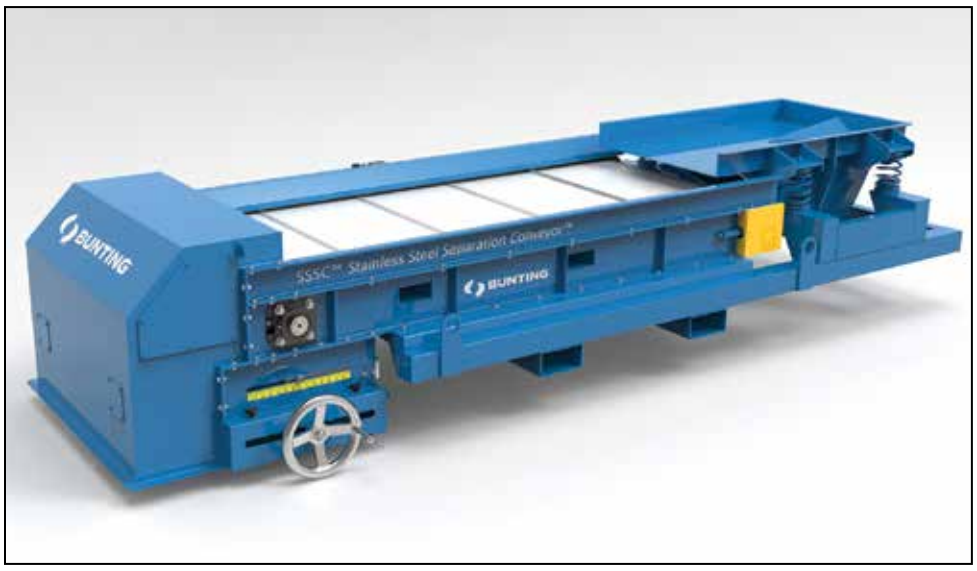
"The SSSC recovers stainless where traditional magnetic systems fall short – and we can prove it. Customers ship or bring their material for testing at our facility and we compile a detailed report, so customers have data, not guesses. Then we engineer the conveyor, feed and discharge setup around the customer's actual line conditions," stated Nick Crain, metals industry manager at Bunting.

Several design features contribute to the SSSC's separation performance and operational control. The conveyor is available with patented 8-inch and 12-inch diameter high-intensity neodymium magnetic head pulleys, designed to capture all sizes of 300 series stainless steel. Variable frequency drives allow belt speeds from 30 to 120 feet per minute, enabling precise adjustment based on material characteristics.

Typical processing capacities average approximately 1,000 pounds per hour and per foot of belt width for small fractions, 1,500 pounds per hour and per foot for mid-size material and up to 2,000 pounds per hour and per foot for large fractions. Optional components include a patented air knife, discharge hood and vibratory feeder to support consistent material flow and cleaner separation.

Crain added that product purity has a direct impact on scrap value. "A few points of purity can be the difference between a premium sale and a discounted load. That's why separation quality matters. It shows up in the margins."

Pat Markiewicz, president of Magnetic Systems International (MSI), explained that the company specializes in problem solving. MSI offers suspended, auto-clean, permanent (SAP) magnets in a multitude of strengths and sizes for the metal recycling and other industries. "We strive to ease any pinch points that our customers might encounter and we've been in the business of designing and manufacturing magnetic separation equipment for over 30 years. During that time, we have seen a steady increase in demand for suspended magnets, both permanent and electromagnetic. Whether we are helping a customer that has a 12" belt with minimal burden, or a 72" belt piled with crushed C&D debris, we offer the right magnet to exceed our customer's needs."



Bunting

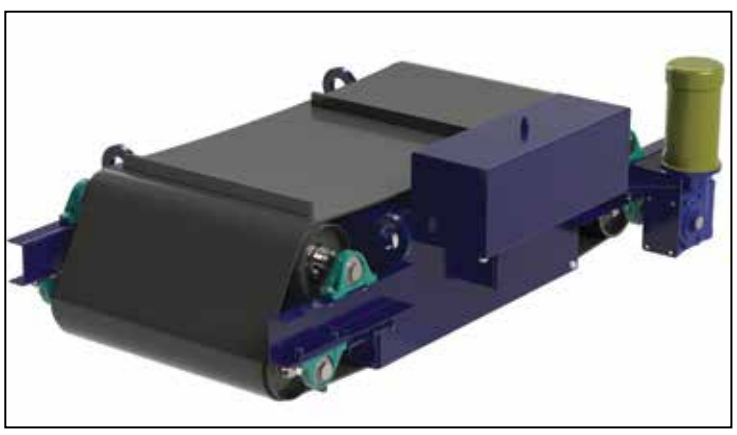
As the world's need for more rare earth minerals continues to grow, Markiewicz noted that MSI has stepped up to the plate by offering their compact suspended electromagnets. "Large scale scrap operations with a variety of belt sizes and speeds as well as finer purification plants have really benefited from utilizing our electromagnets in both manual and self-clean options. Through recent advancements in our designs, we have created a more powerful electromagnet than our competitors, which is provided in compact packaging. These new designs reduce cost related to weight, labor and material. This has in turn, allowed us to pass along substantial savings to our customers. This is a point of pride for us," he concluded.

"Efficient metal separation involves maximizing material recovery, protecting equipment and maintaining consistent throughput. Rotating drum magnets from Puritan Magnetics are engineered specifically to meet these demands, providing continuous, self-cleaning ferrous separation for high-volume recycling environments," reported Andrea Webster, inside sales and marketing.

Rotating drum magnets employ a stationary internal magnetic assembly enclosed by a rotating outer drum. As material – whether shredded plastics, glass cullet, wood waste, rubber, or mixed solids – flows over the drum surface, ferrous contaminants are attracted and held securely. The rotating drum carries this metal out of the material stream and discharges it separately, allowing clean product to move forward without interruption. "This design is especially valuable in recycling operations where metal contamination is frequent and stopping production for manual cleaning is not feasible. In recycling applications, rotating drum magnets play a vital role in protecting downstream shredders, grinders and screening equipment, while improving the purity and market value of recovered materials. With customizable designs and proven performance, our rotating drum magnets are a reliable solution for today's demanding recycling operations," Webster noted.

Puritan Magnetics offers rotating drum systems with multiple

See Magnets, Page B5



Magnetic Systems International

Puritan Magnetics, Inc.

Magnets

■ Continued from Page B4

configuration options to address the variability common in recycling streams. Single or double drum configurations are available, with double drums providing increased magnetic exposure for applications with heavy or consistent ferrous loads. Drums can be built with ceramic magnets for large ferrous pieces or high-strength rare earth magnets for capturing smaller or weakly magnetic metals often missed by conventional separators.

To further optimize performance, Puritan provides custom drum sizes, vibratory feeder inlets for controlled material distribution and adjustable discharge splitters to fine-tune separation efficiency. For facilities handling abrasive or dusty materials, rugged stainless-steel construction and sealed components ensure durability and long service life. Explosion-proof motors and controls are also available for operations subject to safety or environmental regulations.

Sieb Sales & Engineering, Inc. has supported magnet systems for the scrap, steel and railroad industries since 1967. The company supplies both new magnetic handling equipment and long-term support to keep operations productive and reduce downtime. "Bear in mind, there's much more to hanging a magnet off the end of a crane than some may realize," advised Ronald Sieb, president. "A lifting magnet is typically used in very rigorous conditions and demands steady, reliable voltage and the controls to match, depending on the application variables involved."

Sieb works with customers to specify and supply complete magnet systems based on the material being handled, crane capacity, operating cycle and the jobsite environment. The goal is a system that performs consistently and holds up over time – not just a magnet that looks good on paper. "Tell us about your specific requirements," Sieb said. "Then we will provide suggestions that ensure your machine is equipped with the most productive and cost-effective system, specifically designed for your needs."

In addition to new equipment sales, Sieb provides specialized troubleshooting and technical guidance to help customers keep magnet systems running reliably. Support is available nationwide through responsive phone, text and email communication. "We offer unmatched technical support and stock parts for all manufacturers and types of magnet system equipment," Sieb added. "Superior customer service is an integral part of who we are." Sieb also stocks magnet system parts and accessories and offers magnet repair and rebuilding services to extend service life and help customers get back online quickly.

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Sieb Sales & Engineering specializes in magnet systems for the scrap, steel and railroad industries. With decades of application expertise, we design, supply, service, and rebuild magnet equipment that delivers long-term durability, and minimal downtime. Our customer service and build quality are unmatched. Whether you need a new magnet system, replacement components, or expert service support, we keep you running.

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The impact of the war with Iran on metal recycling

by MAURA KELLER
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The ongoing conflict involving Iran is already sending ripples through global metals markets, with some commodities reacting sharply as traders weigh the potential for supply disruptions across key transportation corridors. According to Darrell Fletcher, managing director of commodities at Bannockburn Global, the market response so far has been uneven across the base metals complex, with aluminum emerging as the notable outlier amid broader declines.

Fletcher explained that while many base metals have softened in recent days, aluminum has gained ground due to its unique geographic production footprint. "The only base metal that is higher is aluminum, which most might not initially expect," Fletcher said. He notes that roughly 10 percent of global aluminum output comes from the Middle East, where production is heavily supported by abundant natural gas supplies that power energy-intensive smelting operations. Much of that regional production is exported through the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz, creating a direct link between geopolitical instability and aluminum supply flows. "A significant share of that material moves through the Strait," Fletcher said, adding that disruptions to shipping routes quickly translate into supply concerns for global markets.

Early signs of strain are already emerging within the aluminum supply chain. Fletcher points out that Emirates Global Aluminum, the largest aluminum producer in the United Arab Emirates, has announced delays in shipments as the regional security situation evolves. At the same time, warehouses monitored by the London Metal Exchange are experiencing increased drawdowns, suggesting that consumers and traders may already be tapping inventories as they prepare for potential supply disruptions. "We're seeing increased drawdowns in LME warehouses," Fletcher said, a signal that the market may be bracing for tighter availability if shipping lanes remain constrained.

The broader concern centers on the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz itself. Fletcher emphasized that the narrow waterway is not only critical for metals shipments but also serves as one of the most important energy transit routes in the world. Approximately 25 percent of global oil and petroleum products pass through the strait, along with about 20 percent of the world's liquefied natural gas shipments. Much of that LNG is destined for major Asian economies including Japan, India and China. "This is a big issue," Fletcher said, noting that the security of the passage has immediate implications not only for energy markets but also for energy-intensive metals production worldwide. With insurers reluctant to cover vessels operating in the area, the shipping route is effectively constrained. "There will be huge pressure to keep the Strait safe and open," he explained, "but right now it's essentially not safe or insurable, which means it's largely cut off."

For scrap recyclers and metal market participants, the duration and scale of the conflict will ultimately determine whether current price movements represent short-term volatility or the start of a more sustained shift. Fletcher stresses that the market remains highly sensitive to geopolitical developments. "Both the length and depth of the conflict will determine where this heads," he said, noting that prolonged disruption could tighten supply chains and push certain metals higher while weakening others tied more closely to industrial demand.

Industry leaders agree that scaling recycling capacity will be essential to meeting projected metal demand.

Across the metals sector, one conclusion is increasingly clear. Especially in light of the conflict with Iran, scrap is no longer peripheral to industrial growth.

Wieland acquires Techni-Cast

Wieland has acquired Techni-Cast LLC, a leading centrifugal-casting foundry based in South Gate, California. Founded in 1954 and family-owned for three generations, Techni-Cast is recognized for its operational excellence, deep technical expertise and strong reputation for quality in demanding markets. The company operates two production sites, employs around 100 people, and holds ISO 9001, ISO 14001, and AS9100 certifications, essential for aerospace suppliers.

Techni-Cast's capabilities go beyond casting. In addition to melting and centrifugal casting, the company provides comprehensive finishing steps such as heat treatment and precision machining. Its equipment includes several CNC machines for tight-tolerance machining, as well as conventional lathes for deburring cast parts. This enables Techni-Cast to deliver fully processed components ready for critical applications. The company works with a broad range of alloys. With casting diameters up to 52 inches and weights up to 4,000 pounds, Techni-Cast serves sectors such as aerospace, oil & gas, marine defense and heavy industrial applications.

The integration of Techni-Cast enhances Wieland's U.S. manufacturing footprint and complements its existing portfolio of extruded and cast products. This acquisition reinforces Wieland's commitment to delivering high-quality, sustainable solutions.

"This acquisition strengthens our centrifugal casting capabilities and welcomes a highly skilled team that shares our dedication to quality and customer service. Together with Techni-Cast, we will accelerate growth in North America and ensure critical components remain produced domestically, securing supply chains for key U.S. industries" said Dr. Erwin Mayr, chief executive officer of the Wieland Group.

Greenway Metal Recycling expands to accept e-scrap

Greenway Metal Recycling, Inc. launched its newly redesigned company website. They also announced the expansion of its accepted materials to include electronic scrap, commonly known as E-scrap. The announcement marks a clear step forward for the company as it adapts to the changing needs of commercial and industrial clients throughout Chicago and the Midwest.

The decision to begin accepting electronic scrap reflects ongoing shifts in how businesses manage outdated equipment. As companies replace computers, printers, servers, and other electronic devices more frequently, the volume of electronic waste has steadily increased. At the same time, environmental regulations and data security considerations have made proper disposal more important than ever. By formally expanding into commercial and industrial e-scrap recycling in Chicago & the Midwest, Greenway Metal Recycling, Inc. is responding to these developments with a structured and responsible approach.

Electronic materials now accepted include motherboards, CPUs, printers and other mixed electronic components generated by commercial and industrial facilities. The expansion allows businesses to consolidate more of their recyclable materials through a single provider while ensuring that electronic waste is handled in accordance with established standards.

Steel imports down 12.6 percent

Based on final Census Bureau data, the American Iron and Steel Institute (AISI) reported that the U.S. imported a total of 1,577,000 net tons (NT) of steel in December 2025, including 1,160,000 NT of finished steel (down 3.8 percent and up 6.9 percent, respectively, vs. November 2025). Full year 2025 total and finished steel imports were 25,241,000 and 18,665,000 net tons (NT), down 12.6 percent and 17.1 percent, respectively, vs. 2024. Finished steel import market share was an estimated 14 percent in December and is estimated at 18 percent for full year 2025.

Key steel products with a significant import increase in December compared to November are reinforcing bars (up 135 percent), cut lengths plates (up 68 percent), plates in coils (up 45 percent), hot rolled bars (up 39 percent) and heavy structural shapes (up 37 percent). Products with a significant increase in imports for the full year of 2025 vs. 2024 include tin plate (up 24 percent), line pipe (up 19 percent), wire rods (up 13 percent) and oil country goods (up 13 percent).

In December, the largest suppliers were Brazil (257,000 NT, up 4 percent vs. November), Canada (234,000 NT, down 9 percent), South Korea (167,000 NT, up 1 percent), Mexico (137,000 NT, down 17 percent) and Japan (109,000 NT, up 53 percent). For full year 2025 the largest suppliers were Canada (4,524,000 NT, down 31 percent vs 2024), Brazil (4,126,000 NT, down 8 percent), Mexico (2,823,000 NT, down 20 percent), South Korea (2,662,000 NT, down 5 percent) and Germany (1,128,000 NT, up 5 percent).

U.S. Imports of Steel Mill Products by Country of Origin
(thousands of net tons)

COUNTRY	DEC. 2025 FINAL	NOV. 2025 FINAL	% VAR. DEC. VS. NOV.	FULL YEAR 2025	FULL YEAR 2024	% VAR. 2025 VS. 2024
Canada	234	257	-9.0%	4,524	6,557	-31.0%
Brazil	257	247	4.1%	4,126	4,498	-8.3%
Mexico	137	165	-17.4%	2,823	3,517	-19.7%
South Korea	167	165	1.3%	2,662	2,810	-5.3%
Germany	64	85	-24.2%	1,128	1,074	5.0%
Taiwan	39	80	-51.4%	1,093	1,011	8.1%
Japan	109	72	52.6%	1,075	1,180	-8.9%
Vietnam	59	46	27.9%	869	1,364	-36.3%
India	42	47	-10.1%	553	253	118.3%
Turkey	69	45	51.4%	547	430	27.2%
Netherlands	17	30	-42.1%	526	614	-14.3%
China	56	23	139.8%	442	508	-12.9%
United Arab Emir.	46	18	151.5%	425	404	5.1%
Romania	1	43	-96.6%	407	478	-14.9%
Egypt	4	1	246.8%	343	276	24.0%
All Other	275	314	-12.3%	3,699	3,896	-5.1%
Total	1,577	1,639	-3.8%	25,241	28,870	-12.6%
memo EU-27	219	264	-17.2%	3,879	4,287	-9.5%

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