

# PCR Certification Program

## Frequently Asked Questions



The Association of  
Plastic Recyclers

### What is PCR?

Post-Consumer Resin, also known as Postconsumer Recycled Content.

PCR is material that has met its intended use or can no longer be used for its intended purpose. It can be generated by households or by commercial, industrial, and institutional facilities in their role as end-users of the product.

PCR is different than PIR (Post-Industrial Resin/Recycled Content). PIR is material diverted from the waste stream during a manufacturing process.

### What is the APR PCR Certification Program and why is it needed?

The [APR PCR Certification Program](#) has three components:

1. APR endorses third-party companies to conduct certifications.
2. Reclaimers hire these companies to conduct certification.
3. APR promotes certified PCR from reclaimers who are APR members.

The Program increases accessibility to and confidence in certification across a diversity of PCR applications. Buyers of certified PCR are confident that the PCR they are buying is legitimately PCR, and reclaimers with legitimate PCR enjoy an expanded market for their certified PCR.

### Who is eligible to participate?

Any plastics reclaimer generating PCR pellet or flake can participate in this program, but APR only promotes certified PCR from APR member companies in its listing.

Certifying companies can [apply for endorsement](#) from APR.

### Who are the APR-endorsed certifying companies? Is there a difference between their procedures?

There is a list of [APR-endorsed certifying companies](#) on APR's website.

All APR-endorsed certifying companies must adhere to APR's standards, as defined by [these operating procedures](#), to ensure a clear, consistent definition of PCR.

### Who is APR?

The Association of Plastic Recyclers (APR) is an international trade association representing the plastics recycling industry. APR works to enhance quality and increase supply with technical resources, testing programs, design solutions, corporate training, regulatory leadership, and educational programs.

APR is *not* a certifying organization.

### How can I find a listing of certified PCR suppliers?

APR lists [certified PCR suppliers](#) on its website.

### Does the Program apply to whole products?

Currently, this Program only certifies PCR pellet and flake. APR is looking to expand the Program to certify PCR in products in the near future.

If you would like to receive updates on this topic, you can [sign up here](#).

## **What can I expect during the certification process?**

A mass balance analysis will be conducted of all material flows within the recycling facility to ensure that enough PCR raw materials were purchased and used in production to consistently meet the recycled content claims within the certification period.

There will also be an evaluation of the source of the recycled raw materials to determine the total percent (by weight) of PCR being used to manufacture the product.

At the conclusion of the process, reclaimers will be provided with a certificate from the APR-endorsed certifying company. The certificate is valid for one year.

For more detail on the certification process, please review the addendum below.

## **What does it cost to get my PCR certified?**

The cost will vary based on the number of products being certified, suppliers, sites being audited, and other factors. You can expect the cost to begin at approximately \$5,000 USD. Contact the [APR-endorsed certifying companies](#) to request a quote.

## **Why does this Program only include postconsumer resin (PCR) and not post-industrial (PIR)?**

This Program was created to strengthen and increase plastic recycling. PIR typically has a specification that is consistent and predictable, which means it already easily finds a market and already has a strong demand.

This Program strengthens the demand for PCR. PCR certification provides confidence to buyers that the PCR they seek is legitimate, while simultaneously promoting the legitimate PCR for sale by plastics reclaimers.

## **Does this Program apply to chemically recycled PCR?**

This Program focuses on tracking the origin of the feedstock, which also applies to chemical recycling.

However, the answer to this question is nuanced. APR is currently evaluating how to better adapt the PCR Certification Program to chemically recycled PCR.

## **What is this Program not?**

1. APR does not certify PCR content, nor does it concur with a certifying organization, but rather recognizes companies to conduct the certification process.
2. APR does not adjudicate “percentage of PCR content” disagreements.
3. APR specifically states that APR membership is not a requirement for either the certifying organization or the party for whom the certification is sought.
4. APR does not collect a fee from the company seeking certification of postconsumer content or from the APR-endorsed certifying organization.

# Addendum

## Certification Process

1. **Certifying organizations must adhere and certify to the following definition for PCR (ISO 14021:2016 Section 7.8.1.1).**
  - a. **Postconsumer Recycled Content** means material generated by households or by commercial, industrial and institutional facilities in their role as end-users of the product which has been used for its intended use or can no longer be used for its intended purpose. This includes return of material from the distribution chain.
2. **Certifying organizations will use the following definition for post-industrial resin.**
  - a. **Post-Industrial Recycled (PIR) Content:** Material diverted from the waste stream during a manufacturing process. Included as PIR and excluded as PCR is reutilization of materials such as rework, regrind or scrap generated in a process and capable of being reclaimed with the same process that generated it.
3. **Organizations will use the following guidelines in certifying PCR:**
  - a. **Overview**
    - i. A mass balance analysis will be conducted of all material flows within the recycling facility to ensure enough PCR raw materials were purchased and used in production to consistently meet the recycled content claims within the certification period.
    - ii. There will be an evaluation of the source of the recycled raw materials to ultimately determine the total percent (by weight) of the PCR being used to manufacture the product.
  - b. **Required Documentation:** The certifying company will use at least six months of data, preferably twelve months, from the past year that clearly describes and includes:
    - i. Recipe and documentation for recycled content materials detailing the amount and type of raw materials used to manufacture the material (percent by weight basis).
    - ii. Total production of specified material, during the period being examined.
    - iii. Documentation of recycled content material suppliers including the material provided, the quantity of the material supplied, and the amount of PCR in each material.
    - iv. An address, name of responsible person and contact information for each of the recycled content material suppliers to enable an audit and certification of their claims and verify the PCR designation.
    - v. Any information of supplier variability including frequency of change in suppliers, changes in source location of recycled content material, etc.
    - vi. Purchasing documentation for the recycled content materials which contain data clearly describing existing plant inventory, production, and shipping information along with invoices to match.

- c. **Mass Balance:** Upon receiving initial data, the certifying company will conduct a mass balance analysis of all material flows within the recycling facility to ensure enough recycled content raw materials were purchased and used in production to consistently meet the recycled content claims within the product recipe for the certification period.
- d. **Recycled Content Calculations** - The certifying company will:
  - i. Conduct a review of the actual bill of material/recipe for the specified recycled content product,
  - ii. Verify the pre-and post-consumer designations of the raw materials through supplier inter views and a documentation collection and verification process, and
  - iii. Validate the total amount of PCR content (on a percent by weight basis) within each constituent within the final product/material.
- e. **Annual Recertification Process:** All certified claims are recertified annually for the certifying company to evaluate any changes within the product, operations, or recycling processes to ensure continued compliance with the established criteria.
- f. **Site Audit** - The certifying company can:
  - i. Conduct a site visit and audit of the manufacturer's/recycler's facility and suppliers (suppliers as deemed necessary) to audit and verify the material utilization and material flows within the manufacturing/recycling process,
  - ii. Conduct interviews with representatives at the facility as part of the audit process as well as review any additional data needed to complete the recycled content certification,
  - iii. Walk through the facility to confirm quality control procedures and/or SOPs that define good manufacturing practices when handling recycled content production,
  - iv. Assess inventory control and segregation for inventory of finished product which contains certified recycled content material,
  - v. Conduct a visual inspection and collect photo documentation to verify the recycled content materials being used within the process to manufacture the products, and
  - vi. Conduct a detailed review of documentation and chain of custody records of material flows during the site visit.



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