

Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery

Processing Payment Emergency Regulations

NOTICE OF PROPOSED EMERGENCY ACTION

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) is proposing emergency regulations to amend sections 2975, Subchapter 12, Chapter 5, Division 2, Title 14, of the California Code of Regulations (CCR) that lays out the reasonable financial return (RFR) calculation for processing payments paid to recyclers.

CalRecycle has complied with the requirement to provide notice of the proposed emergency rulemaking pursuant to Government Code section 11346.1(a)(2) and Title 1, CCR, section 50(b)(3)(A).

In compliance with Title 1, CCR, section 48, the following statement is included in this document: Government Code section 11346.1(a)(2) requires that, at least five working days prior to submission of the proposed emergency action to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL), the adopting agency provide a notice of the proposed emergency action to every person who has filed a request for notice of regulatory action with the agency. After submission of the proposed emergency regulation to OAL, OAL shall allow interested persons five calendar days to submit comments on the proposed emergency regulations as set forth in Government Code section 11349.6.

The five-calendar day written comment period permits any interested person, or their authorized representative, to submit written comments addressing the proposed emergency amendments to CalRecycle. Written comments, which offer a recommendation and/or objection, or support the proposed amendment, should indicate the amended section to which the comment or comments are directed.

Comments on the proposed emergency regulations must be submitted directly to OAL within five calendar days of when OAL posts the proposed emergency regulations on the OAL website. Comments on proposed emergency regulations should be submitted to the OAL Reference Attorney by mail to 300 Capitol Mall, Suite 1250, Sacramento, California 95814, by fax to (916) 323-6826, or by e-mail to staff@oal.ca.gov.

When submitting a comment to OAL, a copy of the comment must also be submitted to CalRecycle via:

Electronic Submittal: [Processing Payment Emergency Regulations](#)

OR

Postal Mail:

Shannon Lee
Processing Payment Emergency Regulations
Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery, Regulations Unit
1001 "I" Street, MS-24B
Sacramento, CA 95814

OAL will confirm that CalRecycle has received the comment before considering it. The comment must state that it is about an emergency regulation currently under OAL review and include the topic of the emergency.

The public comment period will commence on November 27, 2024, when the emergency regulations are posted on OAL's website. The public comment period will close on December 2, 2024. **Written comments should be sent to OAL and CalRecycle and received before the close of the public comment period, no later than December 2, 2024.** Additionally, CalRecycle requests that written comments reference a subsection or section of the proposed emergency action. Written comments received by CalRecycle after the close of the public comment period will not be responded to in the rulemaking file.

Please note that under the California Public Records Act (Government Code section 7920.000 et seq.), your written comments, attachments, and associated contact information (e.g., your address, phone, email, etc.) become part of the public record and can be released to the public upon request.

Copies of the proposed regulation text, the Finding of Emergency, and all of the information upon which this proposal is based are available upon request and on CalRecycle's website accessible at the following internet address:
www.calrecycle.ca.gov/Laws/Rulemaking/.

The rulemaking file is also available for review during normal business hours at CalRecycle, 1001 I Street, 24th Floor, Sacramento, California. Please contact the agency contact person, Shannon Lee, at (916) 327-0089 or regulations@calrecycle.ca.gov, if you wish to review the rulemaking file in person. General or substantive questions regarding this file may also be directed to Shannon Lee.

FINDING OF EMERGENCY

The adoption of these regulations is deemed to be an emergency pursuant to Public Resources Code (PRC) section 14536.1 which provides that "if [CalRecycle] determines that it is necessary to adopt or amend regulations to implement section 14575, [CalRecycle] may adopt or amend those regulations as emergency regulations. The Office of Administrative Law shall consider those regulations to be necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health and safety, and general welfare for purposes of section 11349.6 of the Government Code. Notwithstanding subdivision (e) of section 11346.1 of the Government Code, the emergency regulations adopted or

amended pursuant to this section shall be repealed 180 days after the effective date of the regulations, unless [CalRecycle] complies with Chapter 3.5 (commencing with section 11340) of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code.”

CalRecycle is proposing emergency regulations to amend section 2975, Subchapter 12, Chapter 5, Division 2, Title 14, CCR that lays out the reasonable financial return calculation for processing payments paid to recyclers. The term “recycler” for purposes of this rulemaking has the same definition as in PRC section 14519.5., i.e., “recycler” means a recycling center, dropoff or collection program, or curbside program. These entities receive processing payments which reimburse recyclers for the difference between the cost of recycling beverage container material and the value a recycler receives when it sells that material as scrap. For the calendar year 2025, CalRecycle is proposing using a reasonable financial return of 10 percent when calculating processing payments instead of the Dun and Bradstreet index currently printed in section 2975. This change will help support beverage container recycling in California by establishing a stable return on investment that is consistent with the return rate for other types of investments and contracted government services.

FINDING OF NECESSITY

The California Beverage Container Recycling Program (BCRP) was established as a California Redemption Value (CRV) deposit and return system to create convenient beverage container recycling opportunities in the state. CalRecycle is tasked with ensuring consumers throughout the state have convenient recycling options to return their CRV beverage containers to and claim their deposit.

When the BCRP was created thirty-eight years ago, the law provided for a “reasonable financial return” for recyclers to provide sufficient economic incentive to ensure the recovery of the beverage containers. This “reasonable financial return” was further clarified in the CCR section 2975, which states: “The statewide average reasonable financial return for recycling centers shall be equal to the statewide average allowable costs calculated in section 2960 of this subchapter, multiplied by the average return on costs for the scrap and waste materials industry as determined from data contained in the most recent Dun and Bradstreet Standard Three Year Norm Report (published by Dun and Bradstreet Credit Services).” Due to adverse market conditions, the 2017 average return on costs for the scrap and waste materials industry reported by Dun and Bradstreet resulted in a negative reasonable financial return for the first time.

The Dun and Bradstreet Report discontinued publication of the index value for scrap and materials waste industry index in 2019. CalRecycle enacted emergency regulations to set the reasonable financial return for calendar year 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. To address the negative reasonable financial return, the historical instability of the Dun and Bradstreet index, and in response to feedback from industry that the Dun and Bradstreet index used to determine the reasonable financial return was not an accurate reference for the profitability of a recycling center, a 10 percent reasonable financial return was chosen by CalRecycle as it provides a financial incentive comparable to

investing funds in other business ventures or stocks and is the same as rates paid by other government entities for similarly contracted work.

CalRecycle is pursuing emergency rulemaking to ensure that a rate, consistent with the legislative intent to provide sufficient economic incentive that ensures the recovery of beverage containers, is set for calendar year 2025. This emergency rulemaking will again set the reasonable financial return for calendar year 2025 at 10 percent for all recyclers.

CalRecycle proposes to amend section 2975, Subchapter 12, Chapter 5, Division 2, Title 14, CCR to establish a specified reasonable financial return of 10 percent of the statewide average allowable costs provided in section 2960 of these regulations.

TECHNICAL, THEORETICAL, AND/OR EMPIRICAL STUDY, REPORT OR DOCUMENTS RELIED UPON

CalRecycle utilized the following historical sources:

- California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB): Meeting Agenda Notes; May 20, 2008, agenda item 9, attachment 3, retrieved from: CIWMB Meeting Notes (See Attachment 1)
- Investopedia: "What is the Average Annual Return for the S&P 500?" retrieved from: Investopedia Average Annual Return (See Attachment 2)
- 2019 Federal Acquisition Regulation Section 15.404-4 Contract by Negotiation: Profit; retrieved from: Federal Acquisition Regulation (See Attachment 3)
- STD. 399 Fiscal Impact Statement
- STD. 399 Supplemental information

AUTHORITY

These regulations are submitted pursuant to CalRecycle's authority under PRC sections 14530.5(b), 14536, and 14536.1.

REFERENCE

Title 14 CCR amended section 2975 is intended to implement, interpret and make specific PRC sections 14501(f) 14501(g), 14518.5, and 14575.

INFORMATIVE DIGEST

Summary Of Existing Laws And Effect Of The Proposed Action

The California Beverage Container Recycling and Litter Reduction Act, AB 2020/Margolin, Chapter 1290, Statutes of 1986 (Act), created the BCRP and established the Division of Recycling to administer the BCRP. The intent of the Act is to

provide increased and convenient beverage container redemption and recycling opportunities for consumers. This is accomplished through the establishment of the CRV for eligible beverage containers and working with industry participants such as recyclers and processors who are certified by CalRecycle.

PRC section 14501(f) establishes the purpose of the BCRP, including to create and maintain a marketplace where it is profitable to establish sufficient recycling centers and locations to provide consumers with convenient recycling opportunities. The responsibility to provide convenient, efficient, and economical redemption opportunities rests jointly with manufacturers, distributors, dealers, recyclers, processors, and CalRecycle (PRC section 14501(g)). PRC Section 14518.5 defines the term “processing payment.” PRC section 14575 establishes the processing fee, paid by beverage manufacturers and offset by the Beverage Container Recycling Fund (Fund), and the processing payment, paid to recyclers. PRC Section 14575(b)(2) specifies that “a reasonable financial return for recycling centers” is part of the summation to calculate the processing payment.

CalRecycle annually establishes the reasonable financial return each January that is applied to the calculation of the processing payment. The source used to determine the reasonable financial return, as specified in regulation, is the most recent average net profit ratio of businesses classified as scrap and waste materials as reported by Dun and Bradstreet. In 2017, for the first time since the BCRP began using the Dun and Bradstreet index in 2001, the reasonable financial return was a negative value. The reasonable financial return was calculated to be -5.85 percent of allowable costs, a reflection of the overall losses, rather than profits, of the recycling industry. This resulted in lower processing payments to recyclers than the amount necessary to cover the cost of recycling. At the same time, low prices for scrap material, along with other factors such as difficulty in finding locations willing to host recycling centers, led some recycling centers to close, leaving communities with fewer places for people to redeem CRV containers. To address those circumstances, CalRecycle enacted emergency regulations that set the reasonable financial return to 11.5 percent for non-rural recyclers and 16.6 percent for rural region recycling centers for calendar years 2018 and 2019. To provide a more stable and consistent payment structure to recyclers than what would be provided under the current regulations, a 10 percent reasonable financial return was set for calendar years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024.

CalRecycle seeks to do the same for calendar year 2025 in place of the discontinued Dun and Bradstreet index utilized in the regulations.

10 percent is commonly used as a benchmark for a reasonable rate of return on investment. The average annualized return for the S&P 500 since its inception in 1926 through 2018 was approximately 10 percent¹. Additionally, the Federal government utilizes a 10 percent return on the cost of a contract as a reasonable profit amount for a

¹ “What is the Average Annual Return for the S&P 500”; retrieved from Investopedia Average Annual Return

private entity to make when providing a contractual service for the government². A 10 percent reasonable financial return has also been utilized by CalRecycle's Covered Electronic Waste (CEW) Recycling program to incentivize e-waste collectors and processors to collect and process e-waste material that is otherwise expensive and burdensome to recycle and/or reuse. In establishing the 10 percent reasonable financial return for the CEW recycling program, CalRecycle considered both industry profitability and a reasonable rate of return needed to attract new entrants into e-waste collection and processing³.

While actual returns in investment are highly variable by the size and location of a recycler, CalRecycle believes that 10 percent is a reasonable financial return because the returns from investing in a recycling business need to be competitive with the returns expected from other competing investments. Providing a competitive return will maintain investments in recycling center operations as well as investments in infrastructure needed to deliver clean material required to meet increasingly stringent end-user specifications.

The proposed regulations would amend section 2975, Subchapter 12, Chapter 5, Division 2, Title 14, of the California Code of Regulations in order to implement statutory mandates of PRC section 14575. The adoption of these regulations is deemed to be an emergency pursuant to PRC section 14536.1, which provides that, "if [CalRecycle] determines that it is necessary to adopt or amend regulations to implement section 14575, [CalRecycle] may adopt or amend those regulations as emergency regulations. The Office of Administrative Law shall consider those regulations to be necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health and safety, and general welfare for purposes of section 11349.6 of the Government Code. Notwithstanding subdivision (e) of section 11346.1 of the Government Code, the emergency regulations adopted or amended pursuant to this section shall be repealed 180 days after the effective date of the regulations, unless [CalRecycle] complies with Chapter 3.5 (commencing with section 11340) of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code)".

Policy Statement Overview/Anticipated Benefits Of Proposal

The proposed amendment achieves the objective of the authorizing statute to provide a reasonable financial return for recycling centers. The proposed amendment provides the following benefits that are aligned with this objective:

- A 10 percent reasonable financial return provides a competitive return to entities investing in and operating beverage container recycling programs as compared to other investment opportunities.
- A fixed reasonable financial return is more stable than a fluctuating reasonable financial return resulting from the current regulation which entails the risk of

² 2019 Federal Acquisition Regulation Section 15.404-4 Contracting by Negotiation: Profit; retrieved from Federal Acquisition Regulation

³ CIWMB meeting May 20, 2008, agenda item 9, attachment 3, retrieved from CIWMB Meeting Notes

applying a negative return and adds consistency to the processing payment amount provided to recyclers.

- Certified recyclers will receive an additional \$12.7 million annually in processing payments as compared to the average 3 percent reasonable financial return determined from Dun and Bradstreet.

Consistency and Compatibility With State Regulations

Pursuant to Government Code Section 11346.5(a)(3)(D), CalRecycle conducted an evaluation of existing state regulations. The proposed regulations are not inconsistent or incompatible with existing state regulations. The BCRP is unique to the state of California, and there is not a similar program within the state. There are no other matters prescribed by statute applicable to this specific state agency or to any specific regulation or class of regulations.

INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

No documents or forms are incorporated by reference in the proposed regulation.

EXISTING COMPARABLE FEDERAL REGULATION OR STATUTE

CalRecycle has determined that the proposed regulations do not significantly differ from federal law because there are no existing comparable federal statutes or regulations in this subject area.

OTHER STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS (GOVERNMENT CODE SECTIONS 11346.1(b) and 11346.5(a)(4))

CalRecycle has determined that no other matters, as prescribed by statute, need to be addressed.

MANDATES ON LOCAL AGENCIES OR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

CalRecycle has determined that the proposed regulations do not impose a mandate on local agencies or school districts.

FISCAL IMPACT

Costs to Any Local Agencies or School Districts Requiring Reimbursement

CalRecycle has determined that the proposed regulations do not result in costs to any local agency or school district that must be reimbursed pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution and Part 7 of Division 4 of the Government Code Section 17500 et seq.

Cost or Savings to Any State Agency

No state agency will have any costs, savings, or revenue changes. The 10 percent reasonable financial return rate, which has been consistently set by emergency regulation since 2020, was used as the baseline to determine the fiscal impact of setting the reasonable financial return at 10 percent for the 2025 calendar year.

Non-Discretionary Cost or Savings Imposed Upon Local Agencies

These proposed emergency regulations will not result in any non-discretionary cost or savings to any local agencies.

Cost or Savings in Federal Funding to the State

These proposed emergency regulations will not have an impact on costs or savings in federal funding to the state.

Fiscal Impact

Processing payments are calculated based on the difference between the scrap values offered to recyclers and the sum of the actual costs of recycling for certified recycling centers, plus the reasonable financial return. Expenditures for processing payments are funded through processing fee offsets from the Fund and by beverage manufacturers who pay processing fees based on the method for determining processing fees and payments prescribed in PRC section 14575.

The Dun and Bradstreet Index historically used for the reasonable financial return calculation has been discontinued so it is unknown what the alternative rate would be for comparison.

Calendar Year	RFR	Processing Fee Offset (from BCRF)	Processing Fees (from Beverage Manufacturers)	Processing Payment (to All Recyclers in CA)
2020	10%	\$133,159,100	\$33,453,058	\$158,708,045
2021	10%	\$147,502,195	\$39,748,783	\$179,903,998
2022	10%	\$116,129,940	\$30,258,494	\$137,503,249
2023	10%	\$108,289,807	\$23,014,143	\$128,359,893
2024 (projected)	10%	\$170,299,725	\$42,614,061	\$207,321,702
2025 (projected)	10%	\$169,421,510	\$42,410,846	\$206,240,272

In addition to the reasonable financial return rate, the processing payment estimated cost for 2025 is based on the higher scrap value for Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) Plastic, higher cost of recycling and the quarterly adjustments to the processing payments. PRC section 14581(a)(5) authorizes the continuous appropriation of funds to cover any increases in the processing fee offsets paid from the Fund. Expenditures for processing payments are funded through processing fee offsets from the Fund and by beverage manufacturers who pay processing fees based on the method for determining processing fees and payments prescribed in PRC Code section 14575.

The proposed emergency regulations will not result in either costs or savings to any other state agency, local agencies or school districts. No state agency will have any costs, savings, or revenue changes. Approximately 60 processing payment recipients are local government entities who run recycling programs. If this regulation were adopted, continuing the stability of the 10 percent RFR rate since 2020, the estimated processing payments to certified recycling centers operated by local governments in 2025 will be \$6,672,297. The change in the estimated processing payments from year to year are not due to the establishment of the 10 percent RFR rate, but rather due to changes in the underlying scrap values, costs to recycle, and quarterly adjustments to the processing payments.