



ISRI is the voice of the recycling industry, promoting safe, economically sustainable and environmentally responsible recycling through networking, advocacy and education.



December 15, 2020

Dr. Robert Redfield, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Dr. José Romero, Chair of the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices
ACIP Secretariat
1600 Clifton Road, NE, Mailstop H24-8
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027
acip@cdc.gov

Dear Dr. Redfield, Dr. Romero and ACIP Members:

The recycling industry thanks you for your leadership and dedication to protecting Americans during the course of the COVID-19 Pandemic. We are particularly grateful for the care that you, and others throughout the Federal Government, have taken to ensure the safety and distribution of the vaccine that is now available. The information we have seen with regard to the CDC “Vaccination Implementation Planning” and the National Academy of Medicine “Phased Approach to Vaccination Allocation” is the right approach to appropriately prioritizing our frontline workers and older populations for the first issuances of a vaccine.

It is our understanding that ACIP is considering “workers in essential and critical industries” for vaccination once the needs of healthcare workers and long-term care facility residents are met. As you decide these next steps for the roll out, we wish to note that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Administration (CISA) designated workers in the recycling industry as essential early on in the Pandemic. Indeed, manufacturers are dependent on their ability to obtain the feedstock necessary to feed their operations, including to produce the products needed to fight the pandemic. The recycling industry supplies more than 40% of U.S. manufacturer raw material needs.

Recycled metal, paper, plastics, and other commodity-grade materials feed critical U.S. manufacturing operations that produce the rebar, wiring, tubing, transportation, packaging, and other key materials that are needed for everything from construction of new hospitals to the manufacture of new hospital beds, ventilators, toilet paper and other essential supplies needed to keep Americans safe and the economy running during this critical period, and more broadly in meeting manufacturers’ needs now and into the future. For example, recyclers are responsible for supplying 58% of the feedstock to tissue mills throughout the United States, which are responsible for producing the toilet paper and tissues needed every day by U.S. citizens.

Furthermore, many recyclers directly support local governments by providing essential recycling collection and processing for communities across the country. In fact, the vast majority of recycling operations that support municipal programs are not government-owned operations, but they need to be able to remain open with workers protected against the pandemic to support manufacturing and to support public health goals served by the residential recycling system.

From the beginning, recyclers implemented enhanced safety precautions in line with CDC guidelines to protect employees and customers, shifted eligible staff positions to teleworking and adjusted facility layouts to ensure physical distancing while continuing to provide essential services during nationwide shutdowns. However, they also chose to close their public-facing retail operations due to health and safety concerns, reducing the supply of some grades of recyclables from peddlers and other sources, including aluminum cans and certain paper grades.



More than half of all aluminum consumption by manufacturers in the United States comes from recycling. The vaccination of workers within the recycling industry will thus not only protect the employees but will also allow recyclers to maintain the full menu of essential services they provide for U.S. communities and manufacturers.

Thank you for considering recyclers as essential workers and eligible for priority vaccination. And most importantly, thank you again for all you are doing to protect Americans in the fight against COVID-19. Should you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me at rwiener@isri.org or at (202) 309-2864.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robin K. Wiener". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robin" being the most prominent.

Robin K. Wiener
President