

# Lawmakers approve carpet stewardship reforms

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By Jared Paben

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California lawmakers have sent the governor a bill mandating that carpet stewards achieve a 24 percent recycling rate and discouraging the use of incineration. Meanwhile, carpet makers are sticking with their beleaguered stewardship group, instead of submitting alternative collection and recycling plans.

Earlier this year, the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) [rejected a proposed](#) carpet recycling plan submitted by the Carpet America Recovery Effort (CARE), an industry stewardship group. CalRecycle also fined CARE more than \$3 million, alleging that its efforts in prior years fell short of state requirements. CARE is appealing the fine.



Among other accusations, CalRecycle staff say CARE has failed to bring about meaningful improvements in carpet recycling. In 2016, the carpet recycling rate sat at 11 percent, short of CARE's goal of 16 percent. Recycling carpet face fiber, the upper part consumers regularly touch, can yield post-consumer nylon, nylon 6,6, PET/PTT and PP.

In its [2016 program report](#), CARE said it has "set mechanisms in motion to ensure continuous and meaningful improvement today and well into the future." The first quarter of 2017 showed a 16 percent recycled output, [CARE noted](#).

## Legislation passes

The situation caught the attention of state lawmakers, who sent Gov. Jerry Brown a bill making changes to the state's extended producer responsibility (EPR) system for carpet.

[Assembly Bill 1158](#) requires a carpet stewardship plan to achieve a 24 percent recycling rate for post-consumer carpet by 2020. CalRecycle is directed to establish a minimum recycling rate starting in 2023. Under the program, consumers pay fees when buying new carpet, and CARE manages the money. The bill limits how CARE can use the money, prohibiting expenditures on fines, legal expenses or incineration-related disposition. The legislation also establishes an advisory committee to make recommendations on carpet-stewardship plans.

AB 1158 was approved by the State Senate on Sept. 12 in a vote of 30-10, and the Assembly gave its final go-ahead on Sept. 15 with a 52-22 vote.

## Groups applaud lawmakers

The National Stewardship Action Council (NSAC), which sponsored the bill, issued a [press release](#) cheering its passage.

"This is a great victory, one that gives California fee payers and stakeholder's confidence our money will be spent wisely to increase jobs in processing and recycling in California," said Heidi Sanborn, executive director of the NSAC, which is an affiliate of the California Product Stewardship Council. "We are confident the Governor will see the many benefits, including job creation, and will sign the bill."

The bill was supported by two carpet manufacturers, Interface and Tandus Centiva (a Tarkett company), which run carpet recycling programs called ReEntry and ReStart, respectively. Their support put them at odds with CARE, which opposed the bill.

“Recycling carpet at end of life is especially difficult in this era of low petroleum prices, making it economically challenging,” Matt Miller, president of Interface Americas, stated in a [press release](#). “As a result, a robust stewardship plan is that much more important today.”

“The proposed legislation aligns with our parent company Tarkett’s sustainability principles, which include taking back product for recycling through our ReStart program,” Len Ferro, president of Tandus Centiva, stated in the release. “Tarkett’s 2020 sustainability goals focus on closing the loop, creating products within a circular economy, and following product principles outlined by Cradle to Cradle Products Innovation Institute. These values work in tandem with this legislation.”

## Sticking with CARE

Meanwhile, as part of its [enforcement efforts](#), CalRecycle had given carpet manufacturers until Aug. 15 to indicate whether they wanted to continue their membership in CARE or submit alternative carpet recycling plans.

A handful of manufacturers have indicated they’re out of business or will otherwise stop selling carpet in California. But all of those that responded by deadline and plan to continue selling carpet in the state indicated they will stick with CARE, according to CalRecycle. Interface and Tandus Centiva were among those that indicated they’ll continue their membership in CARE.

The company [responses were obtained](#) by Resource Recycling via a public records request (other companies that had not been contacted by CalRecycle also [submitted responses](#) indicating they’ll continue their membership in CARE).

CARE is now working on a revised plan, which it must submit by an Oct. 19 deadline. A decision by CalRecycle would then be expected by the end of the year.

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