



Institute of  
Scrap Recycling  
Industries, Inc.

[www.isri.org](http://www.isri.org)

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Jeff Fager  
Executive Producer  
*60 Minutes*  
524 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10019

Dear Mr. Fager:

Your program recently aired a segment entitled "Following the Trail of Toxic E-Waste," which exposed a recycling company in Guangdong Province in China for illegal pollution practices and associated blame to a recycler in Colorado. Fortunately, a few bad actors are not representative of the entire electronics recycling infrastructure despite what *60 Minutes* would have you believe. There exists today a vibrant, established, global recycling infrastructure that relies on environmentally sound management practices for the recovery of the various commodities that are contained in electronic equipment - including steel, aluminum, gold, silver, titanium, copper, nickel, plastics and glass – for use as valuable raw material feedstock in the manufacture of new products.

Your viewers may also be surprised to learn that your program neglected to show footage of some of the most sophisticated recycling parks in the world, located throughout China, including Guangdong province. If done responsibly, electronics recycling provides a number of environmental benefits including energy savings, carbon emission reductions, and recovery of recyclables such as steel, gold, platinum, palladium and plastics thereby reducing the need to mine virgin ores from the earth to produce new materials. Electronics recycling stimulates the economy and creates jobs in China and throughout the world.

The segment missed a great opportunity to get groups like the Basel Action Network (BAN), to make a real commitment to improve facility operational conditions in Guangdong Province. Rather than trying to help an industry in a developing nation to become a world-class environmentally friendly operation, their tone seemed condescending and suggested that the Chinese lack the sophistication to improve recycling conditions in China. While there can be no argument that the environmental quagmire that was depicted in Guiyu is horrific, we were disappointed by BAN's callous response to Scott Pelley's question as to how BAN would suggest the people of Guiyu otherwise support themselves.

Your segment likely misled viewers by suggesting that American exporters are to blame, and that, if the United States would simply ban those exports, the illegal pollution in China would end. This is simply not true. In today's global economy, there are voluminous amounts of new and used electronic devices being manufactured, sold, used and ultimately meeting the end of their useful lives within China, Southeast Asia, and throughout the world. Collectively, this creates a huge demand for used and end-of-life electronics in the Chinese market that is independent on exports from the U.S and other developed nations. It is a "red-herring" to suggest that if the U.S. banned exports of all new and used electronics that we could solve the problems in Guangdong Province.

Make no mistake, the U.S. scrap industry, which is represented by The Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI), does not condone *illegal* shipments and encourages all efforts to end such *illegal* shipments of electronic scrap to China. ISRI and the scrap recycling industry supports the trade of scrap commodities – including e-scrap – in the global marketplace in full compliance with existing international and national laws that allows industrial consumers worldwide to meet their raw material needs for the production of new products.

To address the environmental problems highlighted by your segment, ISRI encourages efforts to strengthen and enforce Chinese environmental laws. Further, the U.S. EPA, environmental groups such as BAN, and others should be prepared to share their knowledge of best management practices with the governments of developing nations to help them implement environmental controls that will preclude the horrific scenes that *60 Minutes* showed to its viewers.

In fact, ISRI is a strong proponent of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's recently completed Responsible Recycling (R2) program. R2 is an independent set of voluntary operational practices specific to electronics recycling. The practices were developed over the past two years through a multi-stakeholder effort, led by the EPA and is supported by a diverse group including state governments, electronics manufacturers, recyclers, and organizations such as ISRI. Whereas R2 reflects a consensus approach — comprising the views of federal regulators, state governments, recyclers, manufacturers and activists — the “ban all exports” approach advocated in some quarters enjoys no such broad-based consensus.

Let's give R2 a chance to work — and, more importantly, let's consider the long-term implications of slash-and-burn approaches that feel good in the moment but ignore the vital role recyclers can play in meeting our global communities' needs for the safe and environmentally sound processing of electronic devices such as personal computers and Televisions. Electronics recycling isn't going to “go away,” nor should it, so don't blindly punish those who can help solve the problem.

Most of all, let's look for ways to work together — we have much more uniting us than dividing us.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robin Wiener". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Robin Wiener  
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