



California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery

It Has Not Provided the Oversight Necessary to Ensure That the Mattress Recycling Program Fulfills Its Purpose

Background

Created in 2013 to reduce illegal dumping, increase recycling, and reduce public agency costs for managing discarded mattresses, the mattress recycling program (mattress program) is overseen by the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) and works toward meeting the State's statutorily set policy goal: 75 percent of solid waste diverted from landfills by 2020. The State has an extended producer responsibility approach to mattress recycling—product manufacturers or other industry groups operate a program to recycle or safely dispose of products consumers no longer want. CalRecycle performs inspections to ensure mattress retailers, renovators, recyclers, and manufacturers comply with mattress recycling laws while the Mattress Recycling Council (Mattress Council), a nonprofit entity based in Virginia, is responsible for operating the State's mattress program.

Key Recommendations

- The Legislature should do the following:
 - » Require CalRecycle to establish goals for the mattress program that relate to increasing consumer convenience, encouraging source reduction, and reducing illegal mattress dumping.
 - » Require the Mattress Council to maintain a reserve equal to no more than six months of the mattress program's budgeted expenses and authorize CalRecycle to direct the spending of any amount of funding that the Mattress Council accumulates more than the six-month reserve limit.
 - » Require the Mattress Council to develop measurable goals for consumer awareness and research on new technology and to report annually on its progress in meeting goals.
- CalRecycle should update recycling goals to reflect the most current information it has on mattresses disposed of statewide and ensure goals are statewide rather than narrowly focused. Further, it should enforce compliance by assessing penalties for noncompliance with recycling laws.

Key Findings

- While CalRecycle set some recycling goals, it did not set goals related to increasing convenience for consumers, reducing illegal dumping of mattresses, and ensuring consistency with the State's overall approach to waste management by encouraging source reduction.
 - » It set recycling goals that do not encompass statewide recycling activities but rather focus on only those mattresses that the Mattress Council's contractors collect.
 - » It did not use key indicators such as the number of participants and number of illegally dumped mattresses recovered annually to determine whether the program is reducing the number of mattresses that are illegally dumped.
- CalRecycle has not adequately enforced mattress retailers' compliance with the law—it identified violations in 74 percent of the 285 enforcement inspections it completed over a two-year period but did not levy administrative penalties against the violators. The potential total combined penalties in just five cases we reviewed ranged from \$280,000 to \$2.8 million.
- Despite having collected millions of dollars in revenue from consumers to operate the mattress program, the Mattress Council has not used all of those funds to ensure the program achieves the goals.
 - » As of December 2017, the Mattress Council had accumulated \$42 million in reserves or an amount equal to 12 months of expenses.
- The Mattress Council has not established permanent mattress collection sites in seven counties and does not have measures of success for its efforts in raising awareness of the program or researching new technologies.