

# The Scrap Recycling Industry: Scrap Tires

For more than a quarter of a century, the tire recycling industry has explored innovative ways to use recyclable tires as a raw material in the manufacture of new products. These innovations have turned what might have become a waste into a specification grade recyclable commodity. **The U.S. currently generates approximately 300 million new scrap tires every year**, from individuals and other sources that opt to buy or exchange their current tires for a new (or retreaded) set.

Tires not bound for recycling pose an environmental risk. These tires may find their way to illegal tire piles, which pose a combustible risk: an uncontrolled tire fire can burn for days, releasing toxic elements into the air and groundwater. States, in partnership with tire recyclers and other stakeholders, have invested considerable time, energy, and other resources into eradicating many of the tire piles that once were strewn across the nation's landscape. Tires processed from these piles are typically used in civil engineering applications.

In addition to developing markets for crumb and ground rubber, it's important to find markets and outlets for the non-rubber components of the tire. For instance, there's been an **increase in the demand for tire wire** (the steel pulled from the tire during the recycling process). That's a marked change from several years ago, when recyclers had trouble marketing the product. Happily, times have changed—and **steel mills readily accept tire wire as part of their feedstock**. This, in turn, enables tire recyclers to ensure proper recycling of the material, as well as suitable end-of-life tire management.

As concern for the environment grows, and recycling becomes a larger part of protecting it, new rules and regulations will be proposed and considered. Although the goal of these laws will be to **protect the environment**, the reality is that they may in fact make it more difficult to recycle our tires. For that reason, we encourage and welcome an open dialogue with our lawmakers on these issues to **make sure that all sides of the issue are considered** before enacting new rules and regulations.

Recyclable rubber is a valuable commodity that has been finding its way into more and more durable goods and products. With the opening of new markets and opportunities for the use of recyclable rubber, **tire recyclers will be there to take advantage of and ensure tires are recycled in a responsible, environmentally friendly way.**



The tire recycling industry processed **93 million tires in 2007**, with 45% going to civil engineering markets and 55% to ground rubber markets.



Institute of  
Scrap Recycling  
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## THE SCRAP TIRE INDUSTRY

Approximately 84% of scrap tires come from passenger cars, while 15% come from light and heavy trucks. The remaining 1% comes from heavy equipment, aircraft, and off-road tires.

Rubber-modified asphalt accounted for 18.2% of all ground rubber sold in 2007.

32.6% of all ground rubber sold in 2007 went into the molded products market.

About 28.9% of all ground rubber sold in 2007 went into the surfacing/ground cover market.

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