California Waste Solutions Tackles Recycling Contamination Beyond the Sorting Line

Serving more than 343,000 customers in Oakland and San Jose, California Waste Solutions links recycling operations with education to reduce contamination.



David Duong, Founder & CEO of California Waste Solutions at The King Of Trash Pre-Screening Event

OAKLAND, CA, UNITED STATES, September 11, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- California Waste Solutions, Inc. (CWS) is extending its recycling education program across California to better equip the State's residents with a greener environment. The company's new program combines recycling education, property-manager support and facility sorting to address contamination in Oakland and San Jose. Its work extends from helping residents identify what belongs in their carts to separating collected recyclables into materials that buyers can use.

> Education is the cornerstone of the recycling process. The more people understand how it works, the better the result and the cleaner the environment."
>
> *David Duong, Founder & CEO, California Waste Solutions*

Founded in Oakland in 1992 by David Duong with eight used collection trucks, California Waste Solutions received its first City of Oakland franchise in 1993 and has served the city continuously since. The company now operates six Bay Area recycling facilities, bringing experience in collection, processing and recovered-material markets to its work with residents and businesses.

"Providing education to the public about how they can better preserve the environment around them is a cornerstone of our philosophy at CWS of constant improvement," said David Duong, Founder & CEO of California Waste Solutions. "Our attitude is that we have the knowledge and expertise, so why not share it around? CWS is a community service company at heart."

How contamination changes the work inside a recycling facility

CWS collects mixed recyclables which it sorts into different categories such as paper, cardboard, plastics, metals and glass. The task is to recover material in grades that can move into further processing and manufacturing. Collection brings material into the system; sorting and quality control determine what can leave as a marketable commodity.



California Waste Solutions In Lakeshore Street Festival



PELLENC Optical Sorting System in Operation at a California Waste Solutions Recycling Facility

Contamination complicates that work in different ways. Food and liquids can soil otherwise recyclable paper and cardboard, while plastic bags and film can become caught in sorting machinery, slowing production or damaging equipment. Hoses and cords create similar entanglement problems, and materials requiring special handling must be kept out of the ordinary recycling stream.

At California Waste Solutions, trained employees who remove unwanted material and check the quality of recovered recyclables using sophisticated sorting equipment. Mechanics maintain the equipment, while supervisors oversee processing and customer service teams help residents resolve questions about preparation and collection. These activities connect what happens on a collection route with the work required inside the facility.

California Waste Solutions brings recycling education into neighborhoods

California Waste Solutions supports recycling education through school visits, neighborhood events and direct work with residents and property managers. Its outreach includes multilingual guides and sorting tools, along with conversations about unfamiliar packaging, items that require separate handling and what happens to recyclables after collection.

The company's outreach has included a street festival in Oakland's Lakeshore neighborhood, the Oakland Housing Authority Summer Block Party and a recycling education session with a local Daisy Scout troop. These settings give people opportunities to ask questions that a cart label

may not answer. They also help CWS identify where its explanations need to be clearer or more specific.

At apartment and condominium properties, recycling education has to account for shared collection areas. Many households use the same containers, so sufficient capacity, visible signs and consistent tenant information are part of making the system work. Oakland Recycles provides property managers with a toolkit and resident resources that address these needs, and here CWS supports recycling guidance and communication with building operators.

“Being part of the San Jose community means more than providing recycling services. It means listening to the people we serve, supporting local organizations, and working together to build a cleaner, stronger, and more sustainable city,” said David Duong, Founder & CEO of California Waste Solutions.

Material quality determines what can return to market

The recycling process continues after materials have been separated. Recovered commodities must meet the specifications of mills, processors and other buyers before they can return to manufacturing. Contamination can require additional processing, reduce material value or prevent material from meeting a buyer’s requirements.

CalRecycle documented a major disruption to recycling markets in 2018, when China’s National Sword policy prohibited imports of 24 categories of recyclable commodities and imposed tighter contamination requirements on certain other imports. CalRecycle reported that recyclers responded by slowing processing lines, adding sorting labor and purchasing equipment to produce cleaner material.

For California Waste Solutions, material recovery and contamination prevention are closely connected. Facility teams prepare recovered material for buyers, while recycling education helps customers understand what should enter the system in the first place.

“Education is the cornerstone of the recycling process,” said David Duong. “The more citizens and employees at every level understand the process comprehensively, the better the result and the cleaner the product and environment.”

City data shows where problems remain

San Jose measures material placed in single-family recycling carts through its Biennial Recycling Characterization Study. According to the city, contamination fell from 57 percent in 2022 to 41 percent in 2024. Those figures describe the citywide single-family recycling program rather than a California Waste Solutions-only performance measure.

The city’s February 2025 announcement identified continued problems with food- and liquid-contaminated paper and cardboard and plastics not accepted in the program. San Jose has used multilingual information and household-specific cart feedback to address those problems.

Oakland also uses field audits to examine sorting at homes and businesses. For its November 2025 audit, approximately 2 percent of trash, recycling and compost containers were randomly selected for inspection. The work was coordinated with California Waste Solutions and other service providers, with “Oops!” tags identifying misplaced materials and “Good Job!” tags recognizing correctly sorted containers.

The value of those audits extends beyond identifying mistakes. They help cities and service providers see where residents need clearer information and allow education to focus on recurring problems instead of relying on broad reminders to recycle.

Why it matters
Recycling education does not replace effective processing, and processing cannot eliminate the need for clear local instructions..
“At the end of the day, our goal is to help customers keep unsuitable items out, then sort and prepare the collected material for market,” said David Duong, Founder & CEO of California Waste Solutions.

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