



For Immediate Release

Following the Smoke: Investigation of Ten U.S. Companies Points to a Hidden Tsunami of e-Waste Exports to Asia

Basel Action Network (BAN) releases startling exposé “Brokers of Shame”

SEATTLE, WA, October 22, 2025 - Today, the Basel Action Network (BAN), released a new investigative report, [“Brokers of Shame: The New Tsunami of American e-Waste Exports to Asia”](#), documenting how a group of large U.S brokers appear to be facilitating what BAN estimates to be a billion-dollar trade in exporting electronic waste to developing countries. Based on trade data, field observations and independent GPS tracking, BAN’s findings indicate that

significant volumes of U.S. electronics continue to be exported to countries that have prohibited their import and often lack capacity for managing them. As enforcement actions in these countries show, this unwelcome or illegal trade nevertheless thrive and persist raising urgent ethical, environmental, and legal concerns.

BAN's research estimates that each month, approximately 2,000 shipping containers (representing roughly 32,947 metric tonnes) may be filled with discarded U.S. electronics waste leave American ports, destined for countries that have banned their import and are far less equipped to safely handle them. Between January 2023 and February 2025, the ten highlighted U.S. "brokers of shame" collectively appear to have exported more than 10,000 containers of possible e-waste, which would be valued at over \$1 billion USD. Extrapolated industry-wide, this trade could exceed \$200 million USD in traded waste each month - with Malaysia, a Basel Convention state, identified as the primary recipient. During the study period, BAN estimates that U.S. e-waste shipments may have represented nearly 6% of all U.S. trade to Malaysia, underscoring the staggering scale of this toxic trade.

"These companies present themselves as responsible recyclers helping to solve the e-waste crisis," said Jim Puckett, Founder of the Basel Action Network. "But our data and field investigations show a troubling pattern of exports that appear inconsistent with both U.S. and international efforts to ensure safe and legal handling of hazardous waste. These practices undermine public trust, the rule of law, industry certifications, and the protection of human health and the environment."

The report also reveals that:

- **Containers tracked by BAN were routed through, and to, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines and the United Arab**

Emirates despite clear bans under the Basel Convention and national regulations for these countries to lawfully receive this waste.

- **Eight out of the ten identified brokers hold R2V3 Certifications** - An industry standard meant to prevent the kinds of possibly illegal and harmful practices they appear to be engaged in.
- **Several brokers operate out of California**, despite the state's strict e-waste laws requiring full reporting and responsible downstream handling of e-waste and universal waste.
- **A large retailer and Fortune 500 company (Best Buy) has become implicated** in the harmful exports as revealed by BAN's GPS tracking highlighting the need for greater downstream due diligence.
- **One identified "broker of shame" GEM Iron and Metal, Inc., was recently awarded a U.S Defense Logistics Agency contract** to manage and process sensitive electronic waste from the US Department of Defense - thought to be the largest electronic waste generator in the world.
- **Hazardous e-waste may be routinely misdeclared as "commodity materials"** such as unwrought metals, or working or new electronics, likely to evade detection, or prevent paying tariffs.
- **In countries receiving U.S e-waste, undocumented workers desperate for jobs, toil in makeshift facilities beside palm plantations** and industrial waysides, inhaling toxic fumes as they strip wires, melt plastics, and dismantle complex devices without protection.

The scale of the e-waste problem continues to surge worldwide, with devastating consequences. In 2022, a record 62 million tonnes of e-waste was produced, and this is projected to rise 32% to 82 million tonnes in 2030¹. Yet, currently only 17–22% is formally collected and recycled, according to UN figures - but even these figures understate the problem. Much of the counted “recycled” materials end up exported to dirty recycling operations in developing countries, BAN reports.

*“The trafficking of plastic and electronic wastes to my country has caused immense harm,” said **Pui Yi Wong, Researcher in Malaysia, BAN.** “Waste traffickers and illegal recyclers blatantly violate Malaysia's laws in the name of “recycling”, in order to reap profits by polluting our water, air and soil, making communities sick, exploiting and poisoning undocumented workers, and fostering corruption. Like China, Malaysia is now learning the hard way that recycling the world's wastes comes at a heavy price. Americans should recycle their old electronics and plastics in their own country.”*

The *Brokers of Shame* report underscores that the U.S. remains the only industrialized nation that has not ratified the Basel Convention, and is one of only six countries in the world that has failed to do so. The Basel Convention is the international treaty designed to stop rich industrialized nations from dumping their hazardous and other wastes in developing countries. According to BAN, In lieu of the US federal government reigning in this nefarious trade, it falls on industry leaders to step up and reform their operations and certifications to ensure that communities in South and Southeast Asia, Africa, and beyond, will not face a future buried under mountains of hazardous and toxic e-waste.

BAN presents this report not as a condemnation of the entire electronics recycling industry, but as a call to greater accountability and reform. You can

read the full report and BAN's recommendations to enabling actors in the trade of e-waste here: <https://www.ban.org/reports/brokers-of-shame>

Footnotes:

1. <https://unitar.org/about/news-stories/press/global-e-waste-monitor-2024-electronic-waste-rising-five-times-faster-documented-e-waste-recycling>

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Full Report: Brokers of Shame

You can find the full report [here](#) or by scanning the QR code below.



The 10 “Brokers of Shame” Identified in this report:

- **Attan Recycling**
Chino, California
- **Corporate eWaste Solutions (CEWS)**
Brea, California
Hayward, California
Olathe, Kansas
Phoenix, Arizona
- **Creative Metals Group**
Chicago, Illinois
- **EDM**
Chino, California
Piscataway, New Jersey
Plainfield, Indiana
Singapore, Singapore
- **First American Metals Corp.**
Morris, Illinois
Atlanta, Georgia
Fort Worth, Texas
- **Gem Lifecycle Solutions**
Ontario, California
Dallas, Texas
- **Greenland Resource**
Chino, California
Fairview, New Jersey
- **IQA Metals**
Chino, California
Corona, California
Grand Prairie, Texas
- **PPM Recycling**
Paramount, California
Santa Fe Springs, California
Houston, Texas

- **Semsotai**

Brea, California

Frederick, Maryland

Methodology

BAN's findings are based on analysis of shipping records and Bills of Lading, customs and trade datasets, as well as independent GPS tracking of select shipments, and corroborating field investigations conducted in target countries between Jan. 1, 2023 and Feb. 28, 2025. Full methodology, data tables and a description of field methods for each of the “brokers of shame” are online (Appendix A) of the report.

About Basel Action Network

Founded in 1997, the Basel Action Network (BAN) is a 501(c)3 charitable organization of the United States, based in Seattle, WA. BAN is the world's only organization focused on confronting the global environmental justice and economic inefficiency of toxic trade and its devastating impacts. Today, BAN serves as the information clearinghouse on the subject of waste trade for journalists, academics, and the general public. Through its investigations, BAN uncovered the tragedy of hazardous electronic waste dumping in developing countries. For more information, see www.BAN.org.