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## Plastics — Guidelines for the recovery and recycling of plastics waste

*Plastiques — Lignes directrices pour la valorisation et le recyclage des  
déchets plastiques*



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Case postale 56 • CH-1211 Geneva 20  
Tel. + 41 22 749 01 11  
Fax + 41 22 749 09 47  
E-mail [copyright@iso.org](mailto:copyright@iso.org)  
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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO 15270 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 61, *Plastics*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 15270:2006), which has been technically revised.

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## Introduction

This International Standard has been developed to assist all plastics industry stakeholders in the development of

- a sustainable global infrastructure for plastics recovery and recycling;
- a sustainable market for recovered plastics materials and their derived manufactured products.

For the reduction of plastics waste and in support of the objectives of sustainable development, top priority should be given on a product life-cycle basis to

- general reduction of material and energy resource use;
- specific optimization of the use of plastics raw materials.

Options involving the beneficial re-use of plastics products and the integration of plastics recovery processes are important downstream components of sustainable development.

The selection of methodologies and processes for the management of plastics waste available from pre-consumer sources and end-of-life products may be approached using various strategies, all of which should include a preliminary analysis of the available recovery options. In general, plastics recovery technologies can be divided into two classes:

- a) material recovery (mechanical recycling, chemical or feedstock recycling, and biological or organic recycling);
- b) energy recovery in the form of heat, steam, or electricity generation using plastics waste as substitutes for primary fossil fuel resources.

As the optimal recovery option depends on many prevailing circumstances, life-cycle analysis should be applied to decide, depending on the type and composition of the plastics waste, which options are environmentally more favourable and sustainable. In the case of commingled or composite plastics waste, energy recovery and some feedstock recycling processes often represent the optimal choice. Moreover, plastics waste may be managed utilizing a hierarchical framework comprising life-cycle strategies for prevention and minimization both of the volume of waste and of its potentially adverse environmental impact as described in ISO 17422. The potential occurrence of regulated substances in plastics waste requires particular attention.

**NOTE 1** Efficient and discriminatory collection procedures are essential if the operational objective is recovery of monomers or other feedstocks. For mechanical recycling, and indeed all plastics recovery operations, proper process monitoring and control procedures are required. These procedures should include the establishment of specific guides and specifications covering recovered plastics, including, where appropriate, rules for traceability and assessment of conformity.

**NOTE 2** This International Standard is intended to provide a valuable resource that is globally relevant, no matter which particular legislative or regulatory framework for plastics recovery and recycling governs its application. In order to facilitate adoption of the standard within the contexts of diverse national and regional legislative and regulatory environments, the following considerations are emphasized:

- a) The subject of plastics recovery and recycling, being often presented within the perspective of solid-waste management, frequently applies terminology, technology, economics and infrastructure that are based on solid-waste management concepts. These concepts have consequently tended to define the legislative and regulatory environments referred to above.
- b) Alternative perspectives for plastics recovery and recycling that are more comprehensive than those inherent to the solid-waste management model are available based on the concepts of integrated resource management (see Annex B) and sustainable development. Integrated resource management focuses on more extensive systems than

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solid-waste management. It applies life-cycle analysis to achieve better understanding of the resource conservation and eco-efficiency implications of resource management strategies and policies. In this approach, the management of both energy and material resources are viewed within an integrated perspective. The concept of sustainable development, while also applying life-cycle thinking to waste and resource management, is more comprehensive than integrated resource management in that it requires consideration of the so-called three pillars of sustainable development, viz. ecological benefit, economic growth and social progress.

NOTE 3 Although the plastics recovery and recycling sector is a relatively new and emerging industry, significant national and regional efforts have been undertaken to provide legislative and regulatory frameworks applicable to one or more market sectors. The existence of such legal and regulatory frameworks must be kept in mind by users of this International Standard. In the interest of ensuring global relevance, an effort has been made to avoid terminology and definitions that appear to promote one legislative or regulatory framework over another. The intent is that terminology and definitions included in this International Standard embrace, rather than exclude, differing interpretations. A specific example is the question of whether or not a material must be defined as waste before it can be recovered. There is no universal agreement on this point and the standard attempts to accommodate a range of current and possible future definitions and interpretations of the term "waste".