

THE PROBLEM

We are currently facing a plastic waste crisis in Connecticut and globally. More than 90% of used plastic gets dumped or incinerated because it is difficult and expensive to recycle or repurpose. Since 2018, this issue has been exacerbated as other countries shut their doors to foreign waste, putting pressure on the U.S. to deal with its own garbage.

The oil industry has started to shift its focus from transport fuels to plastic production. In fact, plastic production – which industry analysts forecast to double by 2040 – will be the biggest growth market for oil demand over the next decade.

To protect their “Plan B,” the oil industry is promoting a supposed solution to the plastic crisis: advanced recycling. Also known as “chemical recycling” or “molecular recycling,” advanced recycling is an umbrella term for processes that use heat/and or solvents to break down plastics into chemicals, fuels, and toxic waste byproducts.

Advanced recycling is not what the oil industry would have us believe. This false solution is toxic and climate-damaging, and it is intended to increase, rather than decrease, the single-use plastic waste in our lives.

A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION

Treat advanced recycling plants as what they are: waste-handling facilities, rather than recycling plants or manufacturers.

Laws have recently been introduced in a number of states to promote advanced recycling. These often include reclassifying the facilities as manufacturers rather than waste-handling facilities, which can relax pollution regulations and provide government subsidies for these highly polluting, highly energy-intensive plants.

Focus on limiting plastic production.

The best way to address the world’s plastic problem is to curb the production of single-use plastics.



Advanced recycling is merely a way for the oil industry to continue cranking out large volumes of cheap, virgin plastics. Solutions must focus on limiting the amount of new plastic produced.

Center environmental justice in the conversation.

In a recently published report, Just Zero identified 17 operational or near-operational advanced recycling facilities in the U.S. and found that 76% are located in communities of color or low-income communities. This is no accident. The industry pushes states to relax regulations so that it can disempower communities targeted for these polluting facilities.

FAST FACTS

- ❖ Hazardous emissions from advanced plastics recycling plants are as bad as—or worse than—the toxic air pollution from waste incinerators.
- ❖ Pyrolysis can produce dangerous by-products such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.
- ❖ Under federal law, most of the plants are considered large-quantity hazardous waste generators, facilities that generate 1,000 kg or more of hazardous waste per month.

MORE INFORMATION

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