

**NORTHWEST
PRODUCT
STEWARDSHIP
COUNCIL
POLICYMAKERS'
BULLETIN**

This is the first in a series of bulletins from the Northwest Product Stewardship Council to brief you about policy issues drawing attention at the Council. Please feel free to contact us or visit our website at www.productstewardship.net.

Steering Committee:

Clark County
Public Works

King County
Department of
Natural Resources

Kitsap County
Solid Waste Division

Local Hazardous Waste
Management Program
In King County

Metro Waste Reduction
and Outreach Division,
Portland, OR

City of Portland,
Office of Sustainable
Development

Seattle Public Utilities

Snohomish County
Solid Waste
Management Division

U.S. Environmental
Protection Agency,
Region X

Washington State
Department of Ecology

NWPPSC

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Governments Saddled With Electronic Scrap *The Solution is Product Stewardship*



Jurisdictions like yours are expected to manage growing volumes of electronic products that contain hazardous and toxic components. Local governments, waste haulers, and state and federal agencies are faced with the expense of managing these difficult to recycle materials. To make matters worse, the regulations for dealing with these materials are unclear, the recycling infrastructure is weak and there is potential future liability for accepting these materials for disposal.

- Of King County households, 21% have computers they are no longer using, and 43% have two or more televisions in their homes.
- Over three million tons of E-Scrap are generated nationally each year, and only 11% of computers are recycled.
- In Washington and Oregon, over 1,600 computers a day are estimated to be disposed of or moved into storage as obsolete.
- Computer monitors and TVs with cathode ray tubes (CRTs) contain 3 to 8 pounds of lead.

Product Stewardship

Across the nation, government agencies are beginning a dialogue with electronics manufacturers, businesses, product designers, suppliers and retailers to address the environmental impacts of these products. This practice is called "Product Stewardship."

Product Stewardship asks all parties who make, sell, buy and handle electronic equipment to take responsibility for minimizing the environmental impacts of those products at all stages in the products' life cycle. It's a change from the current practice of requiring local governments to manage unwanted products, whereby costs fall on solid waste ratepayers and taxpayers, instead of on the producers and consumers who make, choose and use the products.

Product Stewardship calls on producers to:

- Design products that are more easily disassembled and recycled;
- Use less toxic and more recycled/recyclable materials;
- Design products that last longer, with parts that can be replaced or upgraded;
- Take back used products for rebuilding or recycling;
- Develop an environmentally-sound collection and recycling infrastructure;
- Incorporate the costs for these practices into the product price, to be paid by electronics consumers directly (rather than ratepayers).

Current Status in the Pacific Northwest

Electronic equipment wasn't designed to be taken apart, and components aren't easy to recycle. Disassembly is labor intensive and costly. The recycling infrastructure is weak, hindered by unclear regulations and inconsistent markets. There are strong concerns that some domestic and overseas recycling activities are environmentally harmful.

- There are no CRT recycling facilities in this region. Total Reclaim Inc. in Seattle recently began accepting computer monitors at a cost of \$8 - \$10 each. The cost covers dismantling and transportation to a CRT recycling facility in the eastern United States. Most other local "recyclers" send CRTs overseas.
- States and US EPA are all grappling with how best to handle CRTs. Contact your agencies to learn more about what they are doing and to give input. WA: Contact Tom Cusack, WA Department of Ecology, tcus461@ecy.wa.gov, or 360-407-6755. OR: Contact Chris Taylor, OR Department of Environmental Quality, taylor.chris.m@deq.state.or.us, or 503-229-6165. EPA: Contact Vicky Salazar, US EPA Region IX, salazar.vicky@epa.gov, or 206-553-1060.
- Numerous jurisdictions, including Seattle and Snohomish County, bar "household" and "small-quantity-generator" hazardous waste from municipal trash.
- Computer monitors are not accepted at King County Solid Waste Division Transfer stations from commercial customers unless they can provide evidence that they do not designate as hazardous waste.



- Oregon saw a significant jump in computer and household electronics disposal in its 2000 waste composition study compared to 1998. Contact Peter Spendelow, DEQ for more information (spendelow.peter.h@deq.state.or.us), or 503-229-5253.

Actions For Governments

Learn about electronic product stewardship initiatives.

- Join the **Western Electronic Product Stewardship Initiative (WEPSI)** – a series of stakeholder meetings with industry, government, and nonprofit groups to find a local solution to E-Scrap. The WEPSI dialogue is a good place to turn for a multi-stakeholder regulatory discussion. Four subgroups have been formed: Recycling; Market Drivers; Design; Regulatory. Contact Wayne Rifer at wrifer@concentric.net, or www.wepsi.org
- Follow the **National Electronic Product Stewardship Initiative (NEPSI)** - NEPSI is a process involving 45 stakeholders, the goal of which is to develop a national product stewardship system, which includes a viable financing mechanism, to maximize the collection, reuse, and recycling of used electronics, while considering appropriate incentives to design products that facilitate source reduction, reuse and recycling; reduce toxicity; and increase recycled content. A negotiated agreement is expected to be announced in September 2002, though the resulting system could take several years to put in place. There are a number of NW stakeholders participating in this process. Track NEPSI's progress at www.nepsi.org.

Learn more about the product stewardship approach.

- Join the **National Product Stewardship Institute (PSI)**, and have your jurisdiction adopt its product stewardship principles. PSI exists to assist state and local agencies in establishing cooperative agreements with industry and environmental groups to reduce the health and environmental impacts from consumer product manufacture, use, storage, and disposal. Contact www.productstewardshipinstitute.com.
- Several cities and counties in California have introduced Product Stewardship **Resolutions** about electronics. Links to ordinances, and news articles about proposed ordinances, can be found at www.productstewardshipinstitute.org, and at the California Integrated Waste Management Board's website at www.ciwmb.ca.gov/electronics/News/.

Review and comment about new or proposed regulations.

- The Washington Department of Ecology is drafting **an interim policy** for handling electronics equipment – send them your comments and concerns. Contact Tom Cusack, WA Department of Ecology, tcus461@ecy.wa.gov, or 360-407-6755. For a WA DOE article, "Ecology at Work on Cathode Ray Tubes," visit www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/hwtr/shoptalkonline/2001winter/winter01.pdf. For information on Oregon Department of Environmental Quality contact Chris Taylor, taylor.chris.m@deq.state.or.us, or 503-229-6165.
- US EPA is working on a "conditional exclusion" rule to make the recycling of these materials easier. This rule is expected to take several more years to implement. EPA: Contact Vicky Salazar, US EPA Region IX, salazar.vicky@epa.gov, or 206-553-1060.

Work with manufacturers, retailers, and consumers on product stewardship solutions.

- Urge your jurisdiction to purchase electronic equipment that is "**Environmentally Preferable.**" That means using your buying power to demand products that are less-toxic, more energy efficient, durable, upgradable, and recyclable. See the **NWPC Guide to Environmentally Preferable Purchasing** at www.productstewardship.net.
- Coordinate electronics collection events with local retail stores and manufacturers. Collect data using national data collection protocols and submit the data to the NEPSI data work group so your information can be used in developing a product stewardship system. Remember to track by brand.

