

CASE STUDIES OF COST SAVINGS FOLLOWING ENACTMENT OF EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY LAWS¹

Electronics Stewardship in Hennepin and St. Louis Counties, Minnesota

Hennepin County, Minnesota serves a population of more than 1.1 million people. Since 1992, Hennepin has offered a municipal collection program for consumers to safely dispose of their electronic waste. In May 2007, Minnesota became the fourth state in the country to require a producer responsibility system for e-waste under the Minnesota Electronics Recycling Act. ***During the first year of the program, Hennepin County realized cost savings of more than \$680,000, allowing the local government to allocate its funds to other areas of concern.*** Similarly, St. Louis County in Minnesota serves a population of just under 200,000. The county operates ten sites for electronic waste collection to be used by households. ***During the first year of the manufacturer-financed program, St. Louis County saved approximately \$90,000 in costs generally associated with municipally run e-waste collection efforts.***

Electronics Stewardship in Snohomish County, Washington

The Snohomish County Solid Waste Division (SCSWD) serves more than 680,000 people in western Washington. In 2002, the County established electronics collection at three public transfer stations, using end-of-life fees charged to customers. In 2006, state legislators passed a law requiring an extended producer responsibility program for electronic waste to be operating by January 2009. Under the law, manufacturers are free to partner with both private and public sector collection entities and transfer stations, and in Snohomish County electronics producers agreed to pay \$.09 per pound of e-waste collected at county-operated sites. ***During the first 6 months of 2009, manufacturers paid the county \$170,000 to provide collection for 1.9 million pounds of electronics it received. Transportation and processing costs were paid directly by manufacturers. Before the EPR system, the vendor cost to the County for transportation and processing would have been \$336,000.*** Despite the gross value of \$506,000 to the County for the first 6 months it participated in the program, the economic recession forced significant staff layoffs in the County's solid waste division, and the decision was made to stop collecting electronics at the three public transfer stations in order to downsize recycle facility staffing. This decision was possible due to the robust private collection system established by the manufacturers in Snohomish County – a total of 17 private drop-off locations in addition to the County's 3 locations. The Snohomish County experience shows that EPR systems can provide local governments with choices about whether to participate as a collector of wastes. ***Under such systems, local governments can receive compensation for their collection costs and have significant vendor costs eliminated. Greatly expanded recycling options for the public need not depend on local government-provided services.***

¹ Cost savings detailed here, which are based on local cost information, may differ from PSI's estimates of average costs to collect, transport, and recycle products, which are based on national information. To be useful to local governments throughout the country, PSI has used national cost information in the *Financial Benefits to Local Governments from Product Stewardship* fact sheet and *Financial Benefits Calculator*.

Mercury Thermostat Stewardship in Maine

In 2005, Maine required that all mercury products from households, including mercury thermostats, be recycled. A 2006 law assigned responsibility to the manufacturers of mercury thermostats for the collection, transport, and proper processing and disposal of their used products at end-of-life. Since the manufacturers took responsibility mercury thermostat recycling, 10,927 mercury thermostats have been collected through the manufacturer program. ***In the first two years this program has saved Maine's local governments a total of \$28,098 by shifting the recycling costs from the municipalities to the manufacturers.*** Soon after the Maine program began, the manufacturers offered their collection program as a free service to municipal solid waste facilities nation-wide. The free program provides expanded service benefits, allowing the participating municipalities to provide thermostat collection while their limited budgets may be used elsewhere. As the collection figures increase with each year, the benefits of this service will grow.

CASE STUDIES OF COST SAVINGS THAT COULD BE ACHIEVED IF EPR LAWS WERE PASSED

Medical Sharps Stewardship in Franklin County, Massachusetts

The Franklin County Solid Waste Management District (FCSWMD) in Massachusetts encompasses 21 rural towns, serving more than 60,000 people in a 500 square mile jurisdiction. For individuals using self-injected medical sharps, FCSWMD provides free containers for safe used sharps disposal. In the 2009 Fiscal Year, Franklin County distributed 575 gallon containers and 300 quart containers at a cost of \$3,700. Fees to Stericycle for used sharps disposal came to \$2,700. ***If an EPR system were established, Franklin County would stand to save \$6,400 a year in direct cost savings.*** As collection rates increased, Franklin County could enjoy expanded service with no additional costs.

Fluorescent Lamps Stewardship in Chittenden County, Vermont

The Chittenden Solid Waste District (CSWD) was the first solid waste district to start collecting mercury containing light bulbs in Vermont. It has collected mercury bulbs since 1995 at each of its seven drop-off centers as well as its permanent and mobile hazardous waste collection facilities. Since 1995, CSWD has spent \$161,268 in recycling fees to collect and manage the bulbs. ***In 2008, Chittenden County's HHW program spent an estimated \$64,400 for the appropriate collection, processing, and recycling of mercury-containing lamps.*** With a fluorescent lamps EPR law, the county could use those funds to address other needs. If an EPR law resulted in more lamps being collected and recycled, the value of the services provided would be even higher.

Pesticides – Chittenden County, VT

The Chittenden Solid Waste District (CSWD) reports having collected 10,590 pounds of pesticides and other poisons from households in the 2008 fiscal year. The cost for disposal was \$19,601, which does not include collection and transportation. This equates to a cost of \$1.85 per pound of pesticides recovered. ***Under an extended producer responsibility program, CSWD would achieve direct cost savings of at least \$19,601 as the burden for financing take-back shifted to manufacturers.*** CSWD would also likely see additional savings in the value of expanded collection services provided.