

# Product Stewardship Reducing Waste

## What Is Product Stewardship

Product stewardship is a strategy where manufacturers and other parties who have a role in designing, producing, or selling a product, product component or its packaging take responsibility for reducing environmental impacts at every stage of that product's life including collecting and recycling products at the end of their useful life.

When manufacturers share these costs they have an incentive to incorporate environmental concerns into the earliest phases of product design. For instance to meet European Union product stewardship standards manufacturers design products to be less toxic and easier to recycle.

Minnesota has targeted for stewardship so called problem materials – materials that contribute to the release of pollutants or contaminants, air or water pollution, and/or adversely affect the safe or efficient operation of a solid waste facility or recycling facility.

Those products include carpet, electronics and rechargeable batteries. Often the state, counties and local governments have borne the cost of managing problem materials. So the burden for disposal and recycling falls on the general taxpayer not necessarily the manufacturer or the end user. Successful product stewardship programs such as those for electronics and rechargeable batteries have resulted in industry/government collaborations in which industry takes the initiative for designing and implementing the program. Thus expanding product stewardship initiatives creates business opportunities while saving taxpayers' money.

## Targeted Materials

### Pharmaceuticals/Sharps –

ARM supports SF 1568/HF 1217 to reduce pharmaceutical waste and to efficiently collect and dispose of prescription drugs and sharps.

There is an overabundance of unused prescription drugs that occurs for any of a number of reasons. Drugs that cause waste in our health care system, and pose problems for public health and law enforcement.



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Law enforcement agencies report unused prescription medications are being used at so called Pharm Parties - get-togethers where prescription drugs are exchanged and randomly ingested, in order to become intoxicated.



Past practice has been to recommend that unused prescription drugs be flushed down a drain. Chemicals from dissolved pharmaceuticals have been found in the water and aquatic life downstream of wastewater treatment plants in Minnesota. Wastewater plants are not designed to remove these chemicals from the water they treat. It is not fully known all of the impacts these chemicals in the water have on the environment and on human health. However, research indicates that the chemicals are having a detrimental effect on aquatic organisms. Sen. Doll and Rep. Gardner's legislation (SF 1568/HF 1217) establishes a take back system for unused pharmaceuticals thus alleviating the impacts of improper use and disposal.

(more information on back)

## Enhance Product Stewardship

The Association of Recycling Managers supports the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's endeavors to further product stewardship in Minnesota and nationwide.

ARM supports The Minnesota Product Stewardship Act (HF 2407). This bill would create a framework whereby the MPCA, citizens and industry identify products best managed through product stewardship and develop product stewardship plans for those products.

ARM supports thorough consideration of bills stewarding these products: beverage containers (HF 1128); CFLs (HF 606); pharmaceuticals (SF 1568/HF 1217); phone books (HF 170/SF 129); plastic bags (HF 41) and sharps (SF 1323/HF 1372).

Current law regulates the disposal of sharps (needles) to ensure safe collection and disposal from non-household facilities. ARM supports SF 1323/HF 1372 ensuring that as part of the sale of syringes there is free distribution of sharps disposal containers by manufacturers to retailers and by retailers to consumers.



### Product Stewardship Framework

ARM supports The Minnesota Product Stewardship Act (HF 2407). This bill would create a framework whereby the MPCA would work with citizens and industry (using a determined set of criteria) to annually identify products best managed through product stewardship and to develop product stewardship plans for those products.

This comprehensive framework approach is more efficient than trying to address individual products on a case-by-case basis. The framework approach also lends support to calls for greater consistency across jurisdictions since the plans are developed and managed by industry and thus less susceptible to local political considerations.

In addition, the framework approach establishes the requirement for environmentally sound processing practices and the requirement for product specific performance measures.

### Other Materials For Consideration

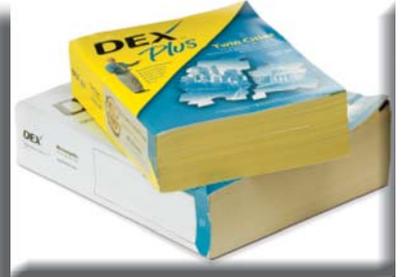
The Association of Recycling Managers supports the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's endeavors to further product stewardship in Minnesota and nationwide. We also support thorough consideration of bills stewarding these products:



**Beverage Containers** – Only about 33% of beverage containers in Minnesota are recycled. While states with container deposit programs such as Iowa and Michigan recycle 72%-95% of beverage containers (MPCA 2009). ARM supports HF 1128 establishing a Recycling Refund program for beverage containers.

**Compact Fluorescent Bulbs** – Fluorescent bulbs use significantly less electricity than incandescent bulbs. However, they contain a minute amount of mercury which means they should not be put in the trash for disposal. ARM supports initiatives to ensure used CFLs are properly collected and recycled such as HF 606.

**Phone Books** – Phone book companies are required by current law to provide for recycling opportunities for old phone books. However, the cost of collection has been shifted to cities, counties and materials processors. ARM supports HF170/SF 129 allowing residents to opt out of receiving telephone directories.



**Plastic Bags** – Studies show that the vast majority of plastic bags distributed by stores are used only once and are never recycled. Because of high quality specifications from manufacturers who recycle bags, plastic bags cannot be collected through curbside recycling collection systems. ARM supports HF 41 which requires larger retailers to have collection areas for plastic bags and requires bag manufacturers to work with retailers to ensure bags are collected and delivered to plastics recyclers.

For more information, please contact ARM Chair Tim Pratt, at 651-792-7027 or [tim.pratt@ci.roseville.mn.us](mailto:tim.pratt@ci.roseville.mn.us)