Extended Producer Responsibility

Clean Production & Zero Waste

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is about changing the rules manufacturers have to follow so they avoid using toxic materials and limit their production of throwaway products. The goal of EPR is to stimulate environmentally sustainable product design that conserves resources and avoids waste. EPR programs focus on the design of products to restrict the use of toxic materials that cause environmental harm and the design of products meant to be thrown away.

- **Prevent Pollution:** In the U.S. there are rules that prohibit the paint industry from using lead, mercury or PCBs in their products and restrict their use of smog-generating volatile chemicals that speed up the time it takes for paint to dry. As a result, the industry has found effective alternatives that do not have adverse impacts on the environment and people's health.

- **Cradle-to-Cradle Management:** EPR requires producers to provide environmental management of their products at every stage of the product's life-cycle, from the raw products used to manufacture them through product use and ultimately recycling—in other words, from 'cradle to cradle' instead of from 'cradle to grave' as typically applies to management of toxic waste. When manufacturers bear the cost of environmental management during the product's manufacture, use and recycling, they have the opportunity and incentive to reduce costs to their consumers by designing products that minimize pollution and waste.

- **Manage Leftovers:** Local communities have had to traditionally manage the disposal of throwaway products and packaging. EPR programs require producers to take back their products or packaging. In Canada, paint companies emphasize the "BUD" principle in their advertising: ***B****uy only what you need;* ***U****se it up,* ***D****ispose of leftovers safely.*

- **EPR is a Worldwide Movement:** EPR emerged as a major movement in the early 1990s—marking a shift to a "product-oriented" environmental policy that seeks solutions through pollution prevention and product design—rather than end-of-pipe waste management. The U.S. has typically focused on banning toxic materials that have been recognized as a problem. In Europe, Asia, and Canada, EPR 'take-back' programs require producers to collect, reuse, and recycle a variety of products including computers, automobiles, household hazardous products, and packaging.

BE SAFE: EPR Means Preventive Action on Pollution

BE SAFE's FOUR PRINCIPLES

1. HEED EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Toxic chemicals pollute the environment during manufacturing and when toxic products end up leaking from landfills. (See *Landfill* Brochure) We can heed these early warning signs and prevent future pollution and waste by taking a precautionary approach that encourages companies to redesign and rethink their manufacturing practices and launch and maintain successful EPR programs.

2. PUT SAFETY FIRST

Billions of pounds of toxic chemicals are used to manufacture everyday products in America each year. These chemicals end up in our air from factory smoke stacks and are dumped in landfills where they eventually leak out. Many everyday products like computers also contain toxic chemicals such as heavy metals and dioxin-like flame-retardants that pollutes the environment when they are thrown away. EPR programs put safety first by taking a pre-emptive strike against pollution and waste. By forcing companies to redesign and rethink their manufacturing practices and provide convenient product take-back programs, we can encourage environmentally-sound product and waste management and discourage the proliferation of toxic, disposable, and over-packaged products.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is a policy tool that extends manufacturer's responsibilities beyond their current accountabilities—for worker health & safety, consumer safety, and production costs—to also include responsibility for life cycle costs of their products and packaging. Essential to EPR is its mandate for producers to 'take back' their end-of-life products and create closed looped systems that prevent pollution and the inefficient use of resources. The ultimate goal of EPR is to encourage cleaner, safer materials and production processes, as well as to eliminate waste at each stage of the product's life cycle.

EPR is a beneficial policy tool that requires manufacturers to put safety first.

- EPR enables producers to contribute to a more ecologically sustainable society by designing and supplying products that provide the greatest functionality and longest life with inherently safe materials and the least use of resources and with safe chemicals.
- EPR reduces public costs by shifting the costs of end-of-life product waste disposal from taxpayers to manufacturers.
- EPR prevents the disposal of used products in landfills and incinerators, sub-standard recycling, or exporting to developing countries.

3. EXERCISE DEMOCRACY

EPR rewards innovative companies that act in the best interest of our communities and the environment. Smart businesses that embrace EPR will be more competitive in the global marketplace. Government needs to support domestic industry through EPR programs that require producer responsibility for products from cradle-to-cradle.

BE SAFE is coordinated by the Center for Health, Environment & Justice. To sign the platform or for more information, contact us at CHEJ, P.O. Box 6806, Falls Church, VA 22040, 703-237-2249, or 518-732-4538, or visit **www.besafenet.com**

Costly pollution and waste do not have to go hand-in-hand with producing goods. When companies rethink their practices, they come up with more efficient and less toxic processes that ultimately save them money. EPR programs saved the Xerox Corporation an estimated $2 billion and kept over one billion pounds of electronic waste out of landfills.

4. CHOOSE THE SAFEST SOLUTIONS

Promote EPR programs and protect our health and the environment. Support efforts to require industry to choose the safest solutions when designing a product.

- **Sign on to the EPR Principles.**

  Developed by a bi-national coalition of clean production, labor and environmental groups, you can sign on at **www.EPRworkinggroup.org.** Get the EPR tool kit from Clean Production Action at **www.cleanproduction.org.**

- **Pass a Community "Producer Responsibility" Resolution.**

  Contact the GrassRoots Recycling Network and learn more about community resolutions at **www.grrn.org/resources/model_res_prod_res.**

- **Support these Consumer Campaigns to remove toxic chemicals from products.**

  Computer Take-Backs -www.computertakeback.com.
  Clean Cars - www.cleancarcampaign.org.
  Mercury Policy Project - www.mercurypolicy.org.
  Beverage Container Take-Backs - www.grrn.org/beverage.

- **BE SAFE.**

  Take precautionary action to protect our health from waste pollution and support producer responsibility. Sign on to the BE SAFE Platform on the next page. Be counted when we deliver this national Platform to the White House in 2005. Endorse the BE SAFE Platform today at **www.besafenet.com**.

- **Your Vote Counts.**

  The next election will set the country's course on producer responsibility and waste policies. For information on state and federal environmental voting records, contact **www.sierraclub.org** and **www.lcv.org.**
  To register to vote, contact **www.earthday.net**

Extended Producer Responsibility Embraced by Manufacturing Giants

Ford, Xerox, and Other Companies Jump on the EPR Bandwagon

"We see it as an opportunity in the U.S. where we are getting into the recycling business… We'll end up owning a vehicle at the end-of-life and have to dispose of it. We will treat it as a technical nutrient, making it into a car or truck again. We are getting ourselves ready for the day when this is truly cradle-to-cradle. We're not fighting it, we're embracing it."

Bill Ford, CEO
Ford Motor Company
1999

Many companies support EPR and see it as an opportunity to be more competitive and economically efficient with their resources. Major electronic manufacturers in Europe—such as Apple, Hewlett Packard, Sony, and Intel—released joint statements of support for a directive that requires electronic manufacturers to take back their end-of-life products, design out harmful materials, and meet recycling/reuse targets.

Xerox estimates their efforts to design environmentally-friendly and energy efficient products have saved them over $2 billion, in addition to keeping 1.2 billion pounds of electronic waste out of landfills. Companies can increase profits by retaining ownership and responsibility of a product throughout its life cycle. For more information, go to **www.xerox.com.**

References and Primary Contributors:

Bill Sheehan, GrassRoots Recycling Network (GRRN).
Beverly Thorpe, Clean Production Network.
Helen Spiegelman, Society Promoting Environmental Conservation.

BE SAFE Platform

In the 21st century, we envision a world in which our food, water and air are clean, and our children grow up healthy and thrive. Everyone needs a protected, safe community and workplace, and natural environment to enjoy. We can make this world vision a reality. The tools we bring to this work are prevention, safety, responsibility and democracy.

Our goal is to prevent pollution and environmental destruction before it happens. We support this precautionary approach because it is preventive medicine for our environment and health. It makes sense to:

- *Prevent pollution and make polluters, not taxpayers, pay and assume responsibility for the damage they cause;*
- *Protect our children from chemical and radioactive exposures to avoid illness and suffering;*
- *Promote use of safe, renewable, non-toxic technologies;*
- *Provide a natural environment we can all enjoy with clean air, swimmable, fishable water and stewardship for our national forests.*

We choose a "better safe than sorry" approach motivated by caution and prevention. We endorse the common-sense approach outlined in the BE SAFE's four principles listed below.

Platform Principles

HEED EARLY WARNINGS

Government and industry have a duty to prevent harm, when there is credible evidence that harm is occurring or is likely to occur—even when the exact nature and full magnitude of harm is not yet proven.

PUT SAFETY FIRST

Industry and government have a responsibility to thoroughly study the potential for harm from a new chemical or technology before it is used—rather than assume it is harmless until proven otherwise. We need to ensure it is safe now, or we will be sorry later. Research on impacts to workers and the public needs to be confirmed by independent third parties.

EXERCISE DEMOCRACY

Precautionary decisions place the highest priority on protecting health and the environment, and help develop cleaner technologies and industries with effective safeguards and enforcement. Government and industry decisions should be based on meaningful citizen input and mutual respect (the golden rule), with the highest regard for those whose health may be affected and for our irreplaceable natural resources—not for those with financial interests. Uncompromised science should inform public policy.

CHOOSE THE SAFEST SOLUTION

Decision-making by government, industry and individuals must include an evaluation of alternatives, and the choice of the safest, technically feasible solutions. We support innovation and promotion of technologies and solutions that create a healthy environment and economy, and protect our natural resources.

Take precautionary action to protect our health from waste pollution and support producer responsibility.
Sign onto the BE SAFE Platform.

Be counted when we deliver this national platform to the White House in 2005. Endorse the platform today at **www.besafenet.com**

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