



Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County

Position Statement on Product Stewardship for Toxic and Hazardous Products

September 12, 2013

The Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County (LHWMP) focuses on reducing public and environmental exposure to hazardous materials, including promoting stewardship of toxic and hazardous products by their manufacturers. This position statement is a working document that will continue to evolve as LHWMP explores product stewardship policies and collaborates with stakeholders.

Product Stewardship is an environmental management strategy that means whoever designs, produces, sells, or uses a product takes responsibility for minimizing the product's health and environmental impacts. Stewardship continues through all stages of the products' life cycle, including end-of-life management. The producer of the product has the greatest responsibility and ability to minimize adverse impacts. However, other stakeholders, such as suppliers, retailers, and consumers, also share responsibility.

Taxpayers and ratepayers currently pay for the disposal and recycling of most products. Product stewardship policies shift responsibility from ratepayer-financed government programs to private sector systems that are financed, and in some cases provided, by product producers.

Effective product stewardship approaches will increase recycling and proper disposal of toxic and hazardous products to better protect the health of people, and the quality of our water and broader environment in the Puget Sound region.

Product stewardship programs can utilize and build on our existing waste recycling and management infrastructure to increase collection and recycling opportunities, and create new business opportunities for service providers.

Product stewardship policies can significantly improve management of hazardous and solid wastes in King County, and throughout Washington State, by:

- Increasing proper management of toxic materials to keep them out of garbage and landfills to reduce human exposure and environmental pollution;
- Increasing recycling and the quantities of recyclable materials that can be used in new products;
- Providing more convenient and equitably distributed collection services to benefit all users of the waste management system;
- Lowering waste management costs for local governments, which benefits taxpayers and ratepayers, by developing a more fair and equitable financing mechanism that internalizes the costs of recycling or disposal of the product in the price paid by consumers.
- Connecting manufacturers to the end-of-life management of their products to provide incentives for reducing waste, increasing recyclability, and reducing toxicity; and
- Adding jobs in our county's and state's waste management and recycling industries.

Product stewardship systems can utilize multiple collection options to increase convenience and effectiveness, including:

- Government-operated moderate risk waste facilities;
- Consumer drop-off at retail stores, with transport to central locations or processors;
- Product take-back at thrift and reuse stores;
- Increased curbside collection where provided by G-certificated and contracted collection companies or by municipalities through innovations in safe handling of toxic products;
- Resident drop-off at existing solid waste transfer stations and private recycling centers.

The Local Hazardous Waste Management Program supports product stewardship legislative proposals that:

1. Will benefit the residents and businesses of King County;
2. Have been developed through stakeholder processes at the local or national levels that have strived to engage all stakeholders, including product manufacturers and waste management companies;
3. Are supported by a coalition of stakeholders, including other local governments; and
4. Align with policy principles developed and supported by the LHWMP and the Northwest Product Stewardship Council. These policies ensure:
 - (a) producers play a primary role in responsibility for end-of-life management of their products,
 - (b) a level playing field for producers and well-defined roles for stakeholders to ensure a fair and effective system,
 - (c) performance goals and standards to protect people's health and the environment while addressing local needs, and
 - (d) sufficient oversight, reporting mechanisms, and transparency.

(See NW Product Stewardship Council policy principles: <http://productstewardship.net/about/what-product-stewardship/>.)