

Extended Producer Responsibility



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Extended Producer Responsibility: What is it?

- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) holds that manufacturers and producers of goods should assume responsibility for the environmental impacts that are incurred by the end of life disposal of those goods.
- When consumers are unable to recycle or extend the continued usefulness of a manufactured good, more waste is generated and environmental impacts are incurred.
- Companies that assume a lead role in EPR seek to reduce the impacts that their products have on the environment after they leave the factory floor.

What does that mean?

- Providing recycling, reuse, or appropriate disposal options for consumers at the end of life of a product

What are the potential benefits?

- Take-back programs can significantly reduce potential costs to local governments as the cost of product disposal is shifted from municipalities and counties to producers.
- Some take-back programs can yield higher return rates for recycled materials given that wastestreams are sometimes more homogenous and may not require sorting.
- Reusing recyclable content in many consumer items can reduce the need for virgin feedstock and potentially increase opportunities for turning that material into products of greater value through upcycling.

What are some examples of EPR?

- Electronics recycling and pharmaceutical take-back programs that are financed by manufacturing companies are just two examples of EPR.
- Apple will buy back products purchased by customers for credit towards the purchase of a new Apple product. This program has reduced the impacts of electronic waste by repurposing older model phones as well as building greater brand loyalty in Apple products.

What are some of the challenges to EPR?

- EPR requires investment on the part of firms that chose to engage in it. Smaller firms may find themselves at a price disadvantage if disposal costs of hazardous materials are high.
- Some disposal options, like dedicated facilities, may not be practical for consumers in rural areas, leaving many citizens without viable means to dispose of their products.
- Many states already require some level of EPR, however, each state's rules and requirements are different, creating a more complicated bureaucratic process.

Would you like to know more about EPR and what your company or community can do? Contact Ben Jarvis at ben.jarvis@deq.idaho.gov or (208) 373-0146.