

AROW PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP POLICY

I. BACKGROUND

Product stewardship is a product-centered approach to environmental protection that calls on those in the product life cycle – designers, manufacturers, retailers, and consumers – to assume primary responsibility for minimizing the product’s environmental impact through all stages of the product’s life cycle and for paying the costs of managing the product at the end of its useful life.

The Report of the Governor’s Task Force on Waste Materials Recovery and Disposal (12/06), recommended a product stewardship approach.

AROW believes product stewardship can minimize the product’s life-cycle environmental impact by:

1. improving the design and manufacture of products and their packaging to facilitate their reuse, recycling, or recovery and
2. establishing programs to collect, process and reuse, recycle or recover products and their packaging when they are discarded.

Product stewardship calls on product manufacturers to reduce the adverse environmental impact of their products and to include the costs of reuse, recovery, recycling or disposal in the price of the product. Establishing a system of product stewardship requires that retailers, consumers and residuals managers cooperate with product manufacturers to develop residuals management solutions that are workable, environmentally sound, and cost-effective, and that legislators and government regulators establish policies and programs that encourage product stewardship.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guiding principles of product stewardship for AROW and its members to use as they collaborate with manufacturers, retailers, consumers, regulators, legislators and residuals managers to develop environmentally sound, safe, and cost-effective programs to manage products at the end of their life. This policy focuses primarily on the end-of-life aspects of product stewardship, to encourage reuse, recycling and recovery in order to reduce the impacts from disposal of products.

III. AROW’S GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP

It is in the best interest of Federal, state, and local governments, industries, consumers and taxpayers to reduce the adverse environmental and financial impacts of consumer products and their packaging. Product stewardship aims to encourage producers to take responsibility for minimizing all of the life-cycle impacts of a product and its packaging – energy and materials consumption, air and water emissions, the amount of potential pollutants in the product, worker hazards, and waste – in product design and end-of-life management.

A. Responsibility

The responsibility for reducing product impacts should be shared among industry (designers, manufacturers, and retailers of products or product components), and consumers. Since the manufacturer has the greatest ability to minimize a product’s life-cycle impacts, it has the most responsibility. Retailers and local governments should assist in educating consumers, and consumers should participate in recycling and take-back programs.

B. Internalized Costs

For all products, the costs of recovering resources and managing products at the end of their useful life should be internalized into the price of the product so that those costs are not paid for by government.

AROW places a priority on products that, due to the environmental cost of materials they contain or other characteristics, require special collection, handling, recycling, recovery or disposal procedures different from the conventional solid waste management practices conducted or coordinated by local governments. In addition to internalizing the full environmental and financial costs imposed by these products into their price, the responsibility of collection, reuse, recycling, recovery and disposal of these products should be shifted away from government and towards those that manufacture and consume them.

C. Use of Incentives

Policies that promote and implement product stewardship principles should create incentives for manufacturers to design and produce products that are made using less energy, materials, and less-toxic components, and which result in less waste (through reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting) and use less energy to operate. These policies should also create incentives for sustainable and environmentally sound collection, reuse, recycling, recovery and disposal of products at the end of their useful lives. Incentives should be tied to the total of environmental and financial costs with the goal of minimizing those costs.

D. Flexible Management Strategies

Those that are responsible for reducing the impacts of products should have flexibility in determining how to most effectively address those impacts. The performance of responsible parties should be measured by the achievement of documented results that relate to a specific goal. Voluntary stewardship programs should be encouraged and facilitated to the extent that they achieve results. Mandatory programs should be implemented where needed to assure protection of public health and the environment, conservation of resources, and accessible, effective collection and recycling systems. In any case, goals and timelines should be reasonable and achievable so that new methods for managing materials are in place before restrictions are placed on the old ones.

E. Mutually Supportive Roles and Relationships

Industry should provide leadership in realizing these principles through voluntary stewardship programs and compliance with mandatory programs where these are necessary. Government should provide leadership in promoting product stewardship through procurement, technical assistance, setting goals, clarifying the criteria and measurements for stewardship requirements (including environmental and safety standards), evaluation, recognition of voluntary programs, education, market development, agency coordination and harmonization. State and federal governments should also address regulatory barriers and provide regulatory incentives, disincentives or requirements that provide clarity, predictability, and a level playing field for industry, and assure that collection systems are accessible to the public. Industry and government should provide and promote information that consumers need to make responsible purchasing, reuse, recycling, and disposal decisions.

IV. AROW's ROLE

As the major state association for solid waste and recycling professionals, with this policy as guidance, AROW will promote these principles in its dissemination of information and training and in its advocacy role as a voice for local governments.

Approved by the AROW Board of Directors on April 21, 2009

Wess Damro, President