Who we are

The Vermont Product Stewardship Council (VTPSC) is a coalition of local governments working with nonprofit organizations, businesses, and individuals to promote product stewardship policies and practices. We are part of an international movement to improve product design by changing how recycling and waste disposal are financed.

What we do

The Vermont Product Stewardship Council:

- Educates Vermont decision makers about product stewardship and facilitates dialogue among stakeholders;
- Develops and recommends policies and educational tools that embody product stewardship principles; and
- Coordinates and participates in regional product stewardship initiatives.

Join us!

Become a member of the Vermont Product Stewardship Council and you will:

- Become part of the growing movement for change in the way products are designed, distributed, and managed at the end of their useful life.
- Keep abreast of VTPSC activities; and
- Receive our monthly e-newsletter with the latest Vermont and national product stewardship initiatives and developments.

For more information, contact:

Jennifer Holliday,
VTPSC Coordinator
(802) 872-8100 ext. 223
jholliday@cswd.net

Product stewardship is not a new concept. In Canada, Europe, Japan, and other countries, many of the same companies that sell products in the U.S. are already part of successful product stewardship programs.

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We operate under two separate product management systems:
- One designs, manufactures, and sells products.
- The other collects and manages these products for reuse, recycling, or disposal.

Why is this a problem?
These disconnected systems leave local government and taxpayers financially and legally responsible for disposal of products, many of which are toxic and most of which are designed to be thrown away after a very short lifespan.

Local government shoulders the entire obligation for disposal of these products, yet has no influence in the design decisions that affect the toxicity or durability of products that they are obliged to manage.

Manufacturers have no incentive to design less toxic, more durable products, or to consider how products are managed at the end of their useful life.

As a result, taxpayers bear the costs.

A market-based approach
We need one system that works. Product recycling must become an extension of the manufacturers’ product marketing system—essentially a reverse model of their own distribution process. It’s already happening in Europe as well as right here in Vermont.

Some manufacturers are beginning to team up with retailers, municipalities, charity organizations, and third-party consolidators to organize collection events and establish ongoing collection points for their products.

Some are exploring how to design products that can be recycled through an integrated system, emphasizing a full circle of customer service.

The current, fragmented program must be replaced with a comprehensive product management approach that:
- Incorporates the full cost of responsible product management into the purchase price, rather than relying on taxpayers to subsidize product collection and recycling.
- Creates market-based incentives for companies to design products that are reusable and recyclable, and to directly participate in engineering ways to efficiently manage them at the end of their useful life.

Tomorrow’s product stewardship system:

How product stewardship works
Product stewardship involves consumers, government agencies, and product manufacturers sharing the responsibility of reducing the eventual impact of product waste.

- Government levels the playing field by passing legislation requiring producers in a product category to meet the same manufacturing standards. Manufacturers participate in a stewardship program as a condition for selling their product.
- Producers take part in designing, managing, and financing a stewardship program that addresses the lifecycle impacts of their products, including end-of-life management.
- Retailers sell these products from producers who are in compliance with stewardship requirements.
- State and local governments work with producers and retailers to educate the public about the stewardship programs.
- Consumers use existing collection systems, including those established by producers.

Today’s linear waste management system:

Manufacturers
Retailers
Consumers
Products disposed in trash and recycling systems funded by local government

Shared responsibility

Products recycled into raw materials
Take-back & drop-off programs

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