



## WHAT IS PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP?

Product Stewardship is the act of minimizing health, safety, environmental and social impacts, and maximizing economic benefits of a product and its packaging throughout all lifecycle stages. The producer of the product has the greatest ability to minimize adverse impacts, but other stakeholders, such as suppliers, retailers, and consumers also play a role. Stewardship can be either voluntary or required by law.\*

Simply, product stewardship is a policy of minimizing the environmental impacts of products in the marketplace. The idea of product stewardship includes collecting and recycling products that are no longer useful, product design, and improved manufacturing. It spans purely voluntary programs initiated by manufacturers to mandatory approaches legislated by government.

### **Shared Responsibility**

The financial burden for product stewardship falls onto the organization that puts a product into the marketplace. But their success depends on the shared responsibility

amongst consumers, retailers, government and others. Some current product stewardship programs include paint, electronics, mercury thermostats, carpet and rechargeable batteries. Call2Recycle®, as an example, was the first product stewardship program for the rechargeable battery industry. Through this voluntary program, many battery and battery-powered product

manufacturers have united to ensure proper end-of-life management through responsible recycling.

### **Ensuring Participation**

Municipalities are feeling an increasing burden to manage waste and budget constraints have made this task enormously difficult. To assist, some



states have mandated proper end-of-life solutions for various product categories. However, voluntary programs, which excel at organizing industry and focusing on efficient management, may fall short of performance expectations without state-mandated requirements for participation. Therefore, to ensure manufacturers or marketers of products are truly sharing responsibility, some industries have sought legislation that bolster participation and a level playing field. Some of these initiatives allow product stewardship programs to take action against those that aren't participating in a qualified program. Municipalities and states have been interested in this concept because it doesn't totally depend on states for enforcement.

## **Performance**

Whether voluntary or required, the performance of product stewardship programs depends on the participation of all obligated parties. To have an impact, product stewardship must be a shared responsibility amongst all those involved in a product's lifecycle—manufacturers, retailers, municipalities, consumers, and legislators. Product stewardship programs, such as Call2Recycle, are a means for all these groups to work together for the protection of the environment.

**Learn more about the Call2Recycle program at [call2recycle.org](http://call2recycle.org) or 877-2-RECYCLE**



\* Product Stewardship Institute, Product Policy Institute and the California Product Stewardship Council

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## **PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP – A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY:**

**Manufacturers:** consider resources and types of materials at the initial product design stage that can help reduce environmental impacts. Participate in a stewardship program that offers responsible end-of-life product management.

**State and Local Governments:** embark on a statewide legislative initiative that would formalize product stewardship requirements and require participation.

**Cities and Municipalities:** support local legislative efforts. Partner with qualified programs to help change behaviors within its community by offering convenient material collection.

**Retailers:** provide recycling information to the consumer. Serve as voluntary collection sites. Only sell products of those producers that participate in an end-of-life solution.

**Consumers:** make every effort to prolong a product's use. Properly dispose of their products at end-of-life through recycling.