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New York e-waste law expands rural electronics take-back opportunities and saves money for residents who recycle, new report finds

With manufacturers footing the bill for electronics recycling statewide, more residents of remote areas recycle their electronics

BOSTON, Mass.—A year and half after the implementation of New York’s Electronic Equipment Reuse and Recycling Act, residents in rural parts of the state now have greater access to e-waste collection sites and can safely and responsibly recycle their used electronics without paying a fee, according to a new report published today by the Product Stewardship Institute, Inc. (PSI).

The report, [*New York State's Producer Responsibility Law for Electronic Waste: Impacts and Effectiveness in Rural Areas*](#), presents the results of surveys and interviews conducted with solid waste and recycling facility managers across rural New York about trends in electronics scrap recycling rates and costs. Forty percent of those managers report having witnessed an increase in the number of electronics collection sites in their communities since New York’s electronics law went into effect. Sixty-five percent report decreased out-of-pocket fees for residents, who were once charged fees of up to \$10 per unit for participating in their communities’ voluntary recycling programs.

“These results show that, with a well-designed program supported by manufacturers, rural districts can experience nearly the same level of recycling service as their urban and suburban counterparts,” said Scott Cassel, founder and chief executive officer of PSI. “Rural residents are recycling and reusing a greater number of electronics, they have more options for drop-off, and it’s costing them less than it did before the law went into effect.”

What is the Electronic Equipment Reuse and Recycling Act, and what is the purpose of the report?

New York’s electronics law is an extended producer responsibility (EPR) law that requires manufacturers to assume post-consumer financial responsibility for the environmentally responsible collection and recycling of their products. More specifically, it mandates that electronics manufacturers fund and develop infrastructure for the recovery and recycling of used electronics throughout the State of New

York. This includes ensuring that there is at least one collection site in every county and population center of over 10,000 residents.

While PSI [released a report](#) in March, 2012 detailing the economic and environmental impacts of the electronics law on New York's urban and suburban areas, its latest report focuses exclusively on rural areas, where opportunities for electronics recycling are typically very limited and where electronics recovery rates tend to be low. PSI found that, since the law took effect, electronics collection and cost savings increased at a faster rate in New York's rural areas than in its non-rural areas—an observation of particular importance because many voluntary e-waste take-back programs had already been in place in urban areas prior to the passage of the electronics law.

“The New York electronics EPR law is a shining example of how a good law can outperform a voluntary recycling program, both in terms of recycling rates and out-of-pocket recycling costs to consumers,” Cassel notes.

Despite benefits, challenges remain

While New York's electronics law has yielded some impressive results thus far, there are still a number of barriers to the overall success of e-waste recycling programs in rural parts of the state. According to the PSI report, remote areas continue to face challenges when it comes to collecting high volumes of waste; this is a disincentive for recycling companies, which lose money making long-distance commutes to and from the collection sites only to pick up a scant amount of material. The reason for this challenge is that rural populations are small and widely dispersed, and remote areas lack high-trafficked, easily accessible retail stores, which would ordinarily act as collection sites.

The report also notes that public awareness about the take-back program is low. An aging population and limited internet access means that rural populations are less likely to receive existing information about the program, which tends to exist only digitally. With low awareness comes low participation.

PSI has outlined a number of recommendations in its report to help boost the success rate of rural electronics recycling programs. To read the report in its entirety, visit www.productstewardship.us.

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About the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI)

The Product Stewardship Institute (PSI) is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing the health and environmental impacts of consumer products at the end of their useful lives. PSI brings together key stakeholders with conflicting interests to develop product end-of-life solutions in a collaborative manner, with a focus on having manufacturers assume primary financial and managerial responsibility. With a robust membership base of 47 state governments and over 200 local governments, as well as partnerships with more than 75 companies, organizations, universities, and non-U.S. governments, PSI advances both voluntary programs and legislation to promote industry-led product stewardship initiatives. For more information, visit PSI online at www.productstewardship.us. You can also follow PSI on Twitter at twitter.com/ProductSteward and on Facebook at facebook.com/ProductStewardship.