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NY e-cycling law boosts volumes

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NEW YORK — A New York state law governing electronics recycling has boosted industry participation, with significant increases in both the number of collection sites and volumes recycled, according to a report by a nonprofit group.

The report, released by the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI) for the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), claims the number of electronics collection sites increased by 77 percent statewide between April 1 and Dec. 31, 2011, following the passage of the New York State Electronics Producer Responsibility Law, which took effect April 1, 2011. In that first partial year, more 44 million pounds of electronic scrap were collected, PSI said.

According to figures gathered by PSI, manufacturers collected 44.8 million pounds of scrap electronics from April to December of 2011, exceeding the legislative goal of nearly 44 million pounds. Prorated to a full year, the figure indicates that 3.1 pounds of electronic scrap were collected per capita, ranking it No. 11 of all states with electronics recycling laws in 2011.

PSI said it was unable to quantify the percentage increase in collection volumes since such data had not been tracked previously. "However, reports from recyclers, government **recycling coordinators** and manufacturers do suggest that the increased ease and convenience of recycling has led to a significant increase in the quantity collected in 2011 as compared to previous years," it said in the report.

Recycling companies interviewed for the report said that they are expanding their collection networks and aggressively pursuing supply arrangements with generators, local governments and other collectors to increase processed volumes. The companies did not disclose the quantity of electronics processed as a result of the law, but many stated that they recorded an increase in material supply, according to the report.

"In fact, many recycling companies interviewed for this report noted that New York's e-waste law facilitated the expansion of their businesses into previously untapped markets and locales," PSI said.

However, PSI noted that increased competition in New York's e-cycling industry has created other problems. Some recyclers have expressed concerns about thin profit margins for e-cycling and noted further cost pressure exerted by "inexperienced, and sometimes unscrupulous, recyclers joining the competition for supply," it said.

"With lower operating costs than their competitors, irresponsible companies can undercut certified, responsible recyclers and offer municipalities a greater payment for the material they collect. This can also cause an unrealistic expectation by municipalities that e-waste collection should be a revenue generating (not just cost-neutral) activity," it added.

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