

Connecticut's e-scrap collection volumes surged higher significantly

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By Paul Ploumis

SEATTLE (Scrap Monster): The new study report prepared by the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI) for the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) indicates significant surge in e-scrap recovery volumes. The report titled “Connecticut Extended Producer Responsibility Program Evaluation: Summary and Recommendations” provides evaluation of four extended producer responsibility (EPR) programs in Connecticut-electronics, mercury thermostats, paint and mattresses.

According to the report, the total e-scrap collections by Connecticut have increased steadily from 3.7 million pounds in 2009 to 18.6 million pounds in 2015. The recovery of covered electronic devices such as televisions, computers, laptops, printers and monitors too has increased over the period. Incidentally, the state of Connecticut currently has four approved electronics recyclers- ECOvanta, ERI, Newtech Recycling and Take 2.

In 2014, e-scrap recycling diverted 333 tons of lead from disposal. The approved e-scrap recyclers in the state recycled nearly 11.6 million pounds of CRT devices during the year. Also, e-scrap recycling resulted in greenhouse gas emission savings of 8.66 million kilograms of carbon equivalent during the year. The savings have surged higher by over four times when matched with savings of 1.9 million kilograms of carbon equivalent recorded in 2009.

The number of permanent collection sites for electronic waste increased rapidly from 86 in 2009 to 273 in 2014. Nearly 92% of Connecticut towns had access to at least one permanent collection site in 2014. Covered electronics recyclers accounted for 90% of the recovered e-scrap, whereas the remaining 10% was recovered by OEM private programs run by brands including Best Buy, Goodwill, Staples etc.,

In 2014, the electronic stewardship program resulted in reduction in municipal disposal costs by over half-a-million dollars, excluding avoided disposal costs. The program provided financial benefits amounting to \$4.4 million to Connecticut municipalities and residents by responsibly recycling 18.5 million pounds of electronic scrap. In addition, the program resulted in creation of as many as 80 recycling-sector jobs through 2016, 68 of which were based in Connecticut. Nationwide, Connecticut was ranked 11th of 25 states that have electronics stewardship program in place.

According to the PSI report, the four EPR programs have collectively diverted 26 million pounds of material from waste, thereby saving Connecticut municipalities and tax-paying residents more than \$2.6 million per year and providing additional services worth another \$6.7 million per year. The introduction of EPR programs have led to savings in millions of dollars to municipalities, which in turn are used for critical services such as police, fire and education. Over and above, the EPR programs have led to creation of over 100 well-paid recycling jobs in the region.

The PSI report also makes several recommendations to improve Connecticut's EPR program. Firstly, the reporting requirement of the stewardship programs must be evaluated to ensure that critical data reaches the public. It also urges stewardship groups to conduct education and outreach campaigns to raise the awareness level of residents. In addition, it also calls upon DEEP to expand the list of entities covered by the program.