



Northwest Product Stewardship Council

[About NWPSC](#) |
 [Products & Sectors](#) |
 [Policies & Legislation](#) |
 [Library](#) |
 [Links](#) |
 [Contact Us](#) |
 [Search](#)



What is Product Stewardship?

Product Stewardship is an environmental management strategy that means whoever designs, produces, sells, or uses a product takes responsibility for minimizing the product's environmental impact throughout all stages of the products' life cycle. The greatest responsibility lies with whoever has the most ability to affect the lifecycle environmental impacts of the product. [Learn more about the Northwest Product Stewardship Council](#) and how we are working to integrate product stewardship principles into the policy and economic structures of the Pacific Northwest.

WHAT'S NEW!

[CALENDAR >](#)

April 20, 2005

Here's a Bright Idea



[Here's a Bright Idea](#)

Recycle your fluorescent light bulbs at participating retail stores in King, Kitsap, Snohomish and Thurston Counties from January 18 – July 18, 2005.

[MORE INFO](#)

ELECTRONICS

[The FULL Report of the Good Guys Electronics Take-back Pilot Project is now available.](#)

MERCURY

[Bills introduced into 2005 Washington legislative session would require manufacturers to submit a plan for the recovery of mercury-added components from end-of-life motor vehicles.](#)

NEW POLICYMAKERS BULLETIN

[The latest NWPSC Policymakers Bulletin discusses third-party organizations \(TPOs\) and their potential role in making product stewardship principles operational.](#)



Northwest Product Stewardship Council

[About NWPSC](#) | [Products & Sectors](#) | [Policies & Legislation](#) | [Library](#) | [Links](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Search](#)



About the Council

[Functions of the Council](#)

[Organizational Structure](#)

[Council Updates](#)

[Defining Stewardship](#)

[Contact Us](#)

About the Council

The Northwest Product Stewardship Council is a group of government organizations that works with businesses and nonprofit groups to integrate product stewardship principles into the policy and economic structures of the Pacific Northwest.

For a history of the council, its early projects and the role it plays in progressing product stewardship concepts in the United States, read the article published in Pollution Prevention Review, Autumn, 2000, "[The Northwest Product Stewardship Council: A Lever Long Enough?](#)"

Functions of the Council

- **Provide:** networking opportunities and information sharing
- **Research:** programs and policies
- **Organize:** educational events, publications, and forum for discussion and action
- **Demonstrate:** pilot programs that promote product stewardship
- **Understand:** options, varied approaches and viewpoints
- **Coordinate:** projects and partners
- **Train:** through technical assistance and outreach

The Council may conduct conversations, educational activities, and projects in any or all of these areas.

Organizational Structure

The Council currently operates as an unincorporated association of members and has no formal legal organizational structure. The Council is comprised of the following entities:

Steering Committee

Members of the Steering Committee are representatives of government agencies that provide funding and/or staff time to NWPSC product stewardship activities and projects. Each agency signs a Letter of Agreement, provides one official representative to the Steering Committee and receives one vote for decision-making purposes. Membership in the Steering Committee is limited to 15 people. Voting members will be accepted at the beginning of each year and shall be added to the formal list of members in the Letter of Agreement.

The Steering Committee of the Northwest Product Stewardship Council:

- Coordinates and supports Council projects
- Organizes regular membership meetings
- Communicates regularly with the membership
- Approves activities and projects done in the name of the NWPSC
- Supports educational events
- Participates in NWPSC projects

Steering Committee Members as of January 1, 2005:

- City of Tacoma, Washington
- King County Department of Natural Resources, Washington
- Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County, Washington
- Kitsap County, Washington
- Metro Waste Reduction, Planning & Outreach Division, Oregon
- Seattle Public Utilities, Washington
- Snohomish County Solid Waste Division, Washington
- Thurston County Department of Water and Waste Management (WWM)
- Thurston County Public Health and Social Services
- United States Environmental Protection Agency, Region X
- Washington State Department of Ecology



Northwest Product Stewardship Council

[About NWPSC](#) | [Products & Sectors](#) | [Policies & Legislation](#) | [Library](#) | [Links](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Search](#)

Products & Sectors

The Northwest Product Stewardship Council and its members focus their efforts on products and/or sectors based upon the following criteria:

- The cost to local governments for the handling and disposal of the products;
- The quantity of the products entering the waste stream;
- The toxicity of the product throughout the lifecycle of the product;
- The potential for private sector participation in voluntary product stewardship programs and activities;
- The potential for mandatory action or legislative support to encourage the development of product stewardship programs;
- The potential for innovation in design that results in an environmentally-sound and sustainable product.

For more information visit our sector-specific pages:

- [Apparel](#)
- [Beverage Containers](#)
- [Electronics](#)
- [Medical](#)
- [Mercury](#)
- [Tires](#)



Northwest Product Stewardship Council

[About NWPSC](#) | [Products & Sectors](#) | [Policies & Legislation](#) | [Library](#) | [Links](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Search](#)

1. Criteria for Selection

The products/sectors are scored against the following criteria using a scale of **High** (worth 3 points), **Medium** (2 points), or a **Low** (1 point). The products/sectors are then compared against each other. The products/sectors with the highest rankings are selected.

- 1.The cost to local governments for the handling and disposal of the products or their overall impact;
- 2.The overall environmental impact of the product including the impacts of manufacture and use, for example energy and resource consumption, land, water and air emissions, and production waste;
- 3.The quantity of the products entering the waste stream;
- 4.The toxicity of the product throughout the lifecycle of the product;
- 5.The potential for private sector participation in voluntary product stewardship programs and activities;
- 6.The potential for mandatory action or legislative support to encourage the development of product stewardship programs;
- 7.The potential for innovation in design that results in an environmentally-sound and sustainable product.

In addition NWPSC may support specific programs or projects based on additional considerations, such as the potential to be a good model for a product stewardship approach.



Northwest Product Stewardship Council

[About NWPSC](#) |
 [Products & Sectors](#) |
 [Policies & Legislation](#) |
 [Library](#) |
 [Links](#) |
 [Contact Us](#) |
 [Search](#)

Criteria	Electronics	Mercury	Paint	Bottles/ Containers	Pharmaceu ticals
1. cost	H (3)	M (2)	H (3)	M (2)	L (1)
2. overall environmental impact	H (3)	H (3)	M (2)	L (1)	M (2)
3. quantity	M (2)	M (2)	L (1)	H (3)	L (1)
4. toxicity	H (3)	H (2)	M (2)	L (1)	H (3)
5. voluntary action	M (2)	M (3)	L (1)	L (1)	H (3)
6. legislation	M (2)	H (3)	L (1)	H (3)	L (1)
7. sustainable design	M (2)	H (2)	M (2)	L (1)	L (1)
Totals	17	17	12	12	12



Northwest Product Stewardship Council

[About NWPSC](#) |
 [Products & Sectors](#) |
 [Policies & Legislation](#) |
 [Library](#) |
 [Links](#) |
 [Contact Us](#) |
 [Search](#)

Emerging Products

Criteria	Products with <u>PBTs</u>	Packaging	Carpet	Tires
1. cost	L (1)	L (1)		
2. overall environmental impact	M (2)	L(1)		
3. quantity	L (1)	M (2)		
4. toxicity	H (3)	L (1)		
5. voluntary action	L (1)	L (1)		
6. legislation	H (3)	L (1)		
7. sustainable design	M (2)	M (2)		
Totals	13	8		



Northwest Product Stewardship Council

[About NWPSC](#) | [Products & Sectors](#) | [Policies & Legislation](#) | [Library](#) | [Links](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Search](#)

Library

NWPSC Policymakers Bulletins

[Electronics Documents](#)

[Mercury Documents](#)

[General Documents](#)

[NWPSC Bulletins](#)

[NWPSC Updates](#)

[Vol 3, Issue 2: Third Party Organizations: Shifting Costs from Local Governments](#)

A discussion of third-party organizations (TPOs) and their potential role in making product stewardship principles operational.

[Vol 3, Issue 1: The Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation \(RBRC\)](#)

A critique of "take back" programs for rechargeable batteries developed by manufacturers and operated by "third party organizations" (TPOs).

[Vol 2, Issue 1: Producer Responsibility - A New Policy Tool to Ease Budget Woes](#)

An explanation of the basic elements of Producer Responsibility (and Product Stewardship) and an overview of current legislation requiring Producer Responsibility actions.

[Vol 1, Issue 2: Mercury - a Highly Toxic and Costly Challenge](#)

An overview of the mercury problems and a list of actions local government can take to encourage "product stewardship" solutions for waste mercury and mercury-containing products.

[Vol 1, Issue 1: Government Saddled with Electronic Scrap](#)

An overview of the issues government faces as a result of the increasing volumes of e-waste entering the municipal solid waste systems and possible Product Stewardship solutions.

[Home](#) | [About the Council](#) | [Products & Sectors](#) | [Policies & Legislation](#) | [Search](#) | [Links](#) | [Contact Us](#)

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Northwest Product Stewardship Council

[About NWPSC](#) | [Products & Sectors](#) | [Policies & Legislation](#) | [Library](#) | [Links](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Search](#)



Products & Sectors

Mercury and Product Stewardship

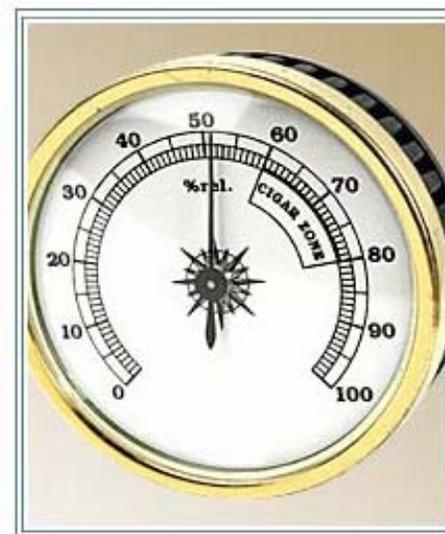
Mercury is a highly toxic element that can exist in gaseous, liquid or solid states. It is highly conductive and exists as a liquid at room temperature. Because of these properties, mercury has been used in many household and commercial products such as electrical switches and relays, thermostats, fluorescent tubes and high intensity discharge lamps, dental amalgam, batteries, measuring instruments (barometers, thermometers, etc.), pharmaceuticals, paint produced before 1992, and laboratory and medical equipment.

How is mercury used? The highly conductive nature of mercury makes it useful in switches, such as the switch in your car trunk. When the trunk is raised to a certain angle, the mercury makes electrical contact and turns on the trunk light. Mercury can also be used in its gaseous state as in fluorescent lighting. Electricity is applied to the electrode at the end of the lamp, which excites the mercury vapor contained in the lamp to produce light.

What is the Problem?

Mercury is a persistent, bioaccumulative, toxic (PBT) material that persists in the environment once released. Products that contain mercury are often not labeled and many pounds of mercury are unknowingly disposed into landfills and incinerators. Many products can be made without mercury or with less mercury. There are also mercury-free products available in the market place. Landfills, incinerators and wastewater treatment facilities are not safe disposal options for these products.

Mercury and products that contain mercury are currently regulated under state and federal hazardous waste laws. Some jurisdictions including Seattle, Snohomish County, and Kitsap County (WA) prohibit household and small quantity generator hazardous wastes from regular garbage. In an attempt to keep



The level of mercury in a barometer changes with the passage of a high or low pressure front to predict a change in the weather.

Apparel

Beverage Containers

Electronics

Medical

Mercury

Fluorescent Bulb Recycling

NWPSC Activities

Business Programs

NGO Programs

Green Purchasing

Tires



Northwest Product Stewardship Council

[About NWPSC](#) | [Products & Sectors](#) | [Policies & Legislation](#) | [Library](#) | [Links](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Search](#)



[Beverage Containers](#)

[Electronics](#)

[NW States](#)

[Other US States](#)

[International](#)

[Mercury](#)

[Other Industries](#)

Policies & Legislation

Electronic Equipment and Product Stewardship



Washington

Governor Locke signed the [HB 2488](#) on March 29, 2004. The legislation directs the Washington State Department of Ecology to work with the state Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) to conduct research and develop recommendations for implementing and financing an electronic product collection, recycling, and reuse program. Reports are due to the legislature in Dec. 2004 and Dec. 2005.



Oregon

[SB 740](#) was introduced into 2005 regular legislative session. The bill requires sellers of certain electronic products to charge first in-state buyers an advanced recycling fee for collection, reuse and recycling of products. The bill requires manufacturers of electronic products to report certain information to Department of Environmental Quality. For [Fact Sheet](#) on the bill visit the Association of Oregon Recyclers web site.

[SB 867 B](#) on was signed by the Governor on August 22, 2003 directing an [advisory committee](#) to examine the reuse and recycling of electronic products and report the findings to the Legislative Assembly.

The completed report, [The Oregon Advisory Committee Report 2005](#), includes analysis of the different electronics reuse and recycling infrastructures in Oregon. After evaluation of several scenarios, an Advanced Recycling Fee received the majority of the Advisory Committee votes. Because there is currently some ambiguity about the regulatory status of cathode ray tubes (CRTs), the Advisory Committee recommends revisiting [the interim CRT rule](#) and consider formal rule making to strengthen enforcement and provide clarification.