



Focus

The Model Litter Control and Recycling Act

The Law

The Model Litter Control act, RCW 70.93, was the first law of its kind anywhere. It was passed by the Washington Legislature in 1971 and ratified by the voters in the 1972 general election as an alternative to a forced deposit proposal. Amendments in 1979 added a youth employment program and public awareness activities concerning recycling, and changed the name to the Model Litter Control and Recycling Act.

The Mandate

Among other things, the law calls for Ecology to conduct a program to control and remove litter, recover and recycle waste materials, foster private recycling programs, and increase public awareness of the need for recycling and litter control.

Funding

The program is funded by a tax on industries that sell, manufacture, or distribute products and packaging which tend to become litter. The relatively small tax (\$150 per \$1 million of gross proceeds) is broad-based and does not create any traceable impact on consumer prices.

The tax revenue is applied to a dedicated litter and recycling account administered by the Department of Ecology. Tax is collected from products in the following categories:

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| 1. Food for human or pet consumption | 8. Household paper and paper products |
| 2. Groceries | 9. Glass containers |
| 3. Cigarettes and tobacco products | 10. Metal containers |
| 4. Soft drinks and carbonated waters | 11. Plastic or fiber containers made of synthetic material |
| 5. Beer and other malt beverages | 12. Cleaning agents and toiletries |
| 6. Wine | 13. Non-drug drugstore sundry products |
| 7. Newspapers and magazines | |

Staffing

Since 1972, the Litter Control and Recycling Program has operated as part of Ecology's waste management effort. In 1989, it was combined with the Office of Waste Reduction, which had been established by the Washington Legislature in 1988 "to encourage voluntary reduction of solid wastes, hazardous wastes, hazardous substances, air pollutants and water pollutants by citizens, businesses and government agencies."

The Waste Reduction, Recycling and Litter Control Program is managed by approximately 75 professional staff at Ecology's Lacey headquarters office and four regional offices – Spokane, Yakima, Tumwater and Redmond. In addition, hundreds of community groups, business and industry, and citizen volunteers around the state make litter control and recycling a truly grass roots effort.