

# **State Electronics Challenge**

## **Environmentally Sound Management of Electronic Equipment: How to Define It?**

In the absence of a single, nationally recognized guideline or system for the certification of electronics recyclers, the State Electronics Challenge (SEC) developed the following list of examples of how an SEC Partner might choose to define environmentally sound management (ESM) of electronics and to evaluate recycling vendors. The examples below include guidelines on equipment and materials handling, programs that certify electronics recycling facilities, and self-assessment checklists. This document will be updated as programs evolve and new opportunities are available.

The SEC does not endorse any single program, but hopes that further definition of ESM of electronics will emerge and result in a system to easily identify recyclers that meet recognized guidelines in the future. Until such a system emerges, any one of the following approaches, or a combination, if used by an SEC Partner to evaluate and select electronics recyclers will help ensure that electronic equipment is handled in an environmentally responsible manner.

Current lists of “certified” or “approved” recyclers provide a very limited selection of vendors, mostly representing companies that have voluntarily sought such certification or recognition. Reference to the availability of such lists below does not represent an endorsement or approval of the vendors by the SEC. Many qualified recyclers are not on these lists. The resources below can help Partners ask questions, evaluate, and qualify vendors themselves, or be used to develop environmental performance criteria for purchasing specifications.

SEC Partners are also encouraged to check with state environmental or purchasing agencies to see if their state has qualified or contracted with electronics recyclers. State contracts for the purchase or lease of equipment might also include provisions for equipment recovery and recycling. Go to [State Links](#).

## Available Guidelines for Defining Environmentally Sound Management

### ◆ **Federal Electronics Challenge Resources**

The Federal Electronics Challenge (FEC) provides federal agencies with the following resources to assist in the selection of electronics recyclers. These checklists are ready to use and applicable to any organization, including SEC Partners.

#### **[Checklist for the Selection of Electronics Recycling Services](#)**

This checklist provides basic questions to ask an electronics recycler about its operations, and can be completed over the telephone with a potential vendor. It was designed as an initial screening tool to be followed by a more thorough evaluation such as an onsite review using the guidelines below.

#### **[Guidelines for On-Site Reviews of Electronics Recyclers](#)**

These guidelines can be used to conduct an on-site evaluation of a contractor that your organization might be considering for managing its surplus equipment. This document provides a detailed list of questions to ask a potential vendor and tips on how to interpret responses and what generally accepted practices are.

### ◆ **[EPA Plug Into eCycling Guidelines for Materials Management](#)**

These voluntary guidelines developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency define preferred waste management practices for electronics. The Guidelines encourage entities that handle used electronic equipment to maximize reuse, refurbishment, and recycling over disposal and incineration; ensure that exported electronic products are being sent for legitimate reuse, recycling, or refurbishment; and provide for special handling of components that may contain substances of concern.

Currently there is no system in place to identify those electronics recyclers that adhere to these guidelines. It is up to government agencies, manufacturers, and others who contract with electronics recyclers to verify adherence to these guidelines.

◆ **Computer Take Back Campaign Electronics Recycler's Pledge of True Stewardship**

The Electronics Recycler's Pledge of True Stewardship includes nine environmental and social stewardship principles that electronics recyclers agree to uphold in their operations and to monitor at downstream processors. Principles include:

- Not sending hazardous electronic waste to landfills or incinerators for disposal or energy recovery;
- Not exporting hazardous electronic waste to developing countries in adherence to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste;
- Not sending equipment to prisons for recycling; providing a visible tracking system for hazardous electronic wastes; and
- Assuring that operations adhere to all applicable environmental health and safety regulations and have a certified or comparable environmental management system in place.

The website includes an interactive U.S. map that lists recyclers by state that have signed the Electronic Recycler's Pledge of True Stewardship. As of August 2007, there were five recyclers in the Northeast that had signed the Pledge.

◆ **International Association of Electronics Recyclers Certification**

The International Association of Electronics Recyclers (IAER) developed a certification process for electronics recyclers that includes third party on-site audits and results in a designation of Certified Electronics Recycler®. The IAER certification program focuses on improving management systems, not evaluating operational or technical processes and performance. The scope of the certification includes general business factors such as business practices, finance, insurance, and security controls, environmental management systems (EMS), quality management systems such as ISO 9000, and health and safety practices, and operational capabilities.

As of August 2007, there were six Certified Electronics Recyclers®, operating 14 facilities in North America and 2 facilities in the Northeast.

◆ **Institute for Scrap Recycling Industries' Recycling Industry Operating Standard (RIOS) & Electronics Recycling Operating Practices**

The Institute for Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI) has developed best management practices for electronics recycling operations that can be used in conjunction with its management system standard.

[ISRI's Recycling Industry Operating Standard \(RIOS\)](#) is a management system standard that integrates quality, environment, and health & safety (QEH&S), and was specifically designed for the scrap recycling industry by the Institute for Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI). Similar to the IAER Certification Standard, RIOS provides a framework for recycling plants to use to achieve measurable continual improvement in their QEH&S performance. Third party audits and certification to RIOS are optional.

[ISRI's Electronics Recycling Operating Practices](#) define a set of best management practices for electronics recyclers that can be used in conjunction with RIOS to ensure compliance with all applicable regulations and ensure environmental and worker protection. The operating practices address on-site and downstream processors, including exports.