



MAY & JUNE 2010

**What Extended Producer
Responsibility Legislation Means to
Us in Niagara County**

What we are throwing away today is not your grandma's trash. Discarded stuff is more exotic, toxic and complex and keeping those harmful materials out of the disposal stream has become a costly effort for municipalities. Items such as electronics, mercury containing devices, pharmaceuticals, and rechargeable batteries are the subject of legislation referred to as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) or Product Stewardship. Many of these products contain toxic components, that when handled correctly can be recovered for recycling.

The purpose of EPR legislation is to promote waste management policy that is focused on shifting the responsibility of *special waste* collection from one that relies on local government funding to one that relies on the manufactures to take back their own products. Once manufactures are responsible for collecting their own stuff, there is incentive for them to alter design or establish collection programs that are accessible to a broad range of residents and businesses. With a collection framework in place, toxic items are diverted from disposal, and importantly, no longer financed by local governments. EPR legislation is similar to the laws for products such as automotive batteries and waste oil or the nickel deposit on beverage containers because the intent is to avoid disposal of toxic and or recoverable materials.

As our garbage progressively becomes more complex and management costs increase, greater resources are needed to prevent disposal and encourage recycling that is not at the expense of taxpayers. Also, an added difficulty in the absence of legislation is that we are not collecting as much as we should, meaning that many *special wastes* will still end up in the disposal stream that is right here in our community. Niagara County has hosted special collection events for Electronics and Pharmaceuticals to divert them from disposal and educate the public about the importance of environmentally responsible waste management. In April 2010, Niagara County lawmakers passed a resolution to support statewide EPR Legislation because it is a win-win-win for Niagara County as less toxic materials are disposed in our community, the burden of financing community collection events is removed, and the possibility for job creation through recycling is created.

In late May, New York lawmakers responded to the many voices in favor of EPR by becoming the 23rd state to pass extended producer electronics legislation. This bill (S.6037a) has been hailed as the "most progressive, well researched e-waste bill in the country" by the Natural Resources Defense Council. Unlike other states, the New York E-waste EPR law will cover a broader range of electronics by including TV's, monitors, computers, printers, MP3 players, keyboards and other peripherals, printers, scanners and fax machines. Upon implementation in April 2011, manufacturers across the state must offer free drop off recycling programs. The state will mandate the amount of electronic waste each company is required to collect based on sales and companies not meeting expectations will be fined and over-achievers will be rewarded with credits.

So, what does this mean for us here in Niagara County? Well, until at least next April we will have to continue as we are by hosting and collecting e-waste from residents so it is not disposed in our landfills. The Niagara County Environmental Management Council (EMC) and “Rethink Your Waste” are hosting a **free e-waste collection event on Saturday July 31 at the Wilson Fire Hall from 10am to 2pm**. When the bill is implemented on April 1, 2011, it is expected that more readily available collection events and drop-off sites will exist to comply with the new law. Importantly, local governments and groups will likely be involved in coordinating these events, but the financial burden of managing the fastest growing component of our waste will be nearly eliminated. By 2015, the bill specifies that all e-waste will be banned from landfills (even from residents) and will have to be recycled.

If you would like to learn more about New York’s E-waste bill, visit this link to the NYSDEC website (<http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/65583.html>). Or, if you want to chat about the new bill or anything else, e-mail us at recycling@niagaracounty.com or visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/rethinkyourwaste.



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