



Principles of Product Stewardship

These Principles of Product Stewardship were developed in 2001 by the founding board members of the Product Stewardship Institute. The Principles support state and local agencies in promoting product stewardship and developing agreements with industry and environmental groups to reduce the health and environmental impacts from consumer products. They will serve as the basis for stakeholder engagement in each product category, and the most viable agreements will occur when the interests of all stakeholders are incorporated.

It is in the best interest of federal, state, and local governments, companies, environmental groups, and consumers to reduce the adverse health and environmental impacts of consumer products. To achieve this result, product stewardship efforts aim to encourage manufacturers and retailers to take increasing responsibility to reduce the entire life-cycle impacts of a product and its packaging – energy and materials consumption, air and water emissions, the amount of toxics in the product, worker safety, and waste disposal – in product design and in end-of-life management. Product stewardship is a key strategy to reduce greenhouse gas impacts and address climate change issues.

- Responsibility

The responsibility for reducing product impacts should be shared among industry (designers, manufacturers, and retailers of products or product components), government, and consumers. The greater the ability an entity has to minimize a product's life-cycle impacts, the greater is its degree of responsibility, and opportunity, for addressing those impacts. Manufacturers have the greatest ability, and responsibility, to reduce product impacts.

- Internalize Costs

All product lifecycle costs – from using resources, to reducing health and environmental impacts throughout the production process, to managing products at the end-of-life – should be included in the total product cost. The environmental costs of product manufacture, use, and disposal should be minimized, to the greatest extent possible, for local and state governments, and ultimately shifted to the manufacturers and consumers of products. Manufacturers should thus have a direct financial incentive to redesign their products to reduce these costs.

- Incentives for Cleaner Products and Sustainable Management Practices

Policies that promote and implement product stewardship principles should create incentives for the manufacturer to design and produce “cleaner” products – ones made using less energy, materials, and toxics, and which result in less waste (through reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting) and use less energy to operate. These policies should also create incentives for the development of a sustainable and environmentally-sound system to collect, reuse, and recycle products at the end of their lives.

- Flexible Management Strategies

Those that are responsible for reducing the health and environmental impacts of products should have flexibility in determining how to most effectively address those impacts. The performance of responsible parties shall be measured by the achievement of goal-oriented results.

- Roles and Relationships

In realizing these principles, industry will need to provide leadership. Government will also provide leadership in promoting the practices of product stewardship through procurement, technical assistance, program evaluation, education, market development, agency coordination, and by addressing regulatory barriers and, where necessary, providing regulatory incentives and disincentives. Industry and government shall provide – and consumers should take full advantage of – information needed to make responsible environmental purchasing, reuse, recycling, and disposal decisions.

In addition to PSI’s 47 state and over 170 local government members, the following organizations have endorsed these Principles of Product Stewardship.

- CT Product Stewardship Council (adopted: April 2010)
- National League of Cities (adopted: November 2009)
- Solid Waste Association of North America (adopted: October 2001)
- Carolina Recycling Association (adopted: August 2003)
- Northeast Recycling Council (adopted: Spring 2003)
- Southern California Association of Governments (adopted: January 2003)
- Environmental Council of the States (adopted: October 2002)
- California Resource Recovery Association (adopted: November 2001)
- North American Hazardous Materials Management Association (adopted: September 2001)
- Northwest Product Stewardship Council (adopted: July 2001)

[PSI Product Stewardship Policy](#)