

# e-Stewards® Certification Fact Sheet

April 15, 2010



## Introduction

Electronic equipment and gadgets have, at their end-of-life, become the largest toxic waste problem of our time. E-waste contains some of the very toxic substances: heavy metals such as mercury, lead, cadmium, arsenic, beryllium; persistent bio-accumulative chemicals such as brominated flame retardants and more. When disposed of improperly, such materials in modern electronic equipment can cause cancer, reproductive disorders, and other health problems.. Many of these heavy metals and chemicals either last forever or persist for extremely long periods and build up in the ecosphere. And most terribly, much of the world's e-waste is burned or dumped in landfills, creating even worse toxic pollutants. Perhaps the most horrific impacts from electronic waste comes as a result of export to developing countries in Asia or Africa. There, impoverished workers process the materials in primitive backyard, sweatshop conditions that ravage entire communities with some of the most severe pollution ever recorded.

The 1989 Basel Convention is a United Nations treaty which was designed to prevent the global dumping of toxic waste on developing countries from more developed countries. In 1995 the Parties to the Convention adopted a decision to amend the Convention and ban the export of hazardous wastes for any reason from rich industrialized countries to developing countries. Unfortunately, the United States is the only developed country that has failed to ratify the Basel Convention, let alone the Basel Ban Amendment. However, because the US is not a party to the Convention, it is illegal for many (currently 143) Basel countries to accept hazardous waste from the US. Nevertheless the US continues to export hazardous e-wastes to them, contributing to violation of the laws of importing countries and the illegal trafficking of hazardous waste globally.

The **Basel Action Network's e-Stewards® Certification** program is a response to this lawlessness and irresponsibility here in the United States. The e-Stewards program makes it easy for consumers of all sizes to find responsible recyclers. The e-Stewards Certification assures integrity of recycling operations through a rigorous independent audit process conducted by accredited certification bodies. The e-Stewards Standard, written for international use, operates completely under the framework of the Basel Convention and the Basel Ban, and therefore prohibits the export of toxic e-waste to developing nations as the global community of nations decided.

## Facts about the e-waste crisis

- Up to 50-million tons of e-waste is generated worldwide each year according to the United Nations Environment Program. This is enough to fill a line of garbage collection trucks stretching halfway around the world.
- The amount of global electronic waste is expanding at 8 percent per year (BCC research) and the e-waste industry is expected to nearly triple in size to \$15B by 2015 (ABI research).
- Unfortunately though most of the business in the United States does not involve recycling here at home but rather export of the waste to developing countries lacking the infrastructure to deal with it safely.
- Lead concentrations in the blood of children in Guiyu, China were measured at more than 50% higher than the allowable exposure level set by US Center for Disease Control.

- A water sample taken by BAN found that lead levels in a river in the village of Guiyu, China were 2400 times higher than the WHO limits for lead in drinking water.

### Facts about the e-Stewards Initiative

- The first steps of the e-Stewards Initiative were made 2003 when BAN created the Electronics Recyclers Pledge of True Stewardship. It has now transitioned into a fully accredited, independently audited certification program.
- The e-Stewards Certification program is currently available in all developed countries. It was founded by the support of 14 leading recyclers (e-Stewards Founders) and BAN, with the extensive advice of industry, occupational health and safety, and certification experts.
- The e-Stewards Standard incorporates the global ISO 14001 standard for environmental management systems, plus many industry specific performance requirements, including a complete ban on exports of toxic e-waste from developed to developing countries, and the use of prison labor, landfills or incinerators for toxic materials. It also disallows shredding of mercury, and requires stringent worker health and safety protections.
- There are currently nearly 50 Pledged e-Stewards Recyclers, all of whom are committed to being certified by August 31, 2011 to retain the e-Stewards designation. 3 Recycling companies comprising 6 certified processing sites are already certified to the new e-Stewards Standard and another 12 companies have contracted with e-Stewards independent certification bodies to be certified. 7 of these locations are outside of the United States.
- The e-Stewards Certification is the only electronics recycler certification that has the backing of the Environmental Community. In the US that backing includes an endorsement from **Greenpeace USA**, the **Natural Resources Defense Council** and the **Sierra Club**. Additionally the initiative has been endorsed by over 60 environmental organizations worldwide.
- The **e-Stewards Enterprises** are companies and institutions that agree to always make best efforts to use e-Stewards Recyclers. At the current time these institutions include **Apollo Group, Bank of America, Capital One, Premier, Inc, Premier Farnell, Samsung, and Wells Fargo.**

### Quotes about the e-Stewards Certification

- *"The e-Stewards Enterprise program makes it easy for us to demonstrate that our electronic waste management standards are responsible and align with best practices. By using e-Stewards Recyclers, we know that our old computers and other electronics aren't going to be disposed of in a way that harms people or the environment."* **Mary Wenzel**, director of Environmental Affairs, **Wells Fargo Bank**.
- *"The e-Stewards Standard is the only means to identify responsible electronics recycling and asset management companies. Period."* **Bob Houghton**, Redemtech
- *"E-Stewards certification was created in partnership with recyclers to insure it is achievable and cost-effective."* **Neil Peters-Michaud**, CEO, Cascade Asset Management, Inc
- *"The only credible certification is 3rd party, independent, with explicit social and environmental NGO support."* **Michael Conroy**, author of "Branded!: How the 'Certification Revolution is Transforming Global Corporations'"

### About BAN

BAN was founded in 1997 and is dedicated to stemming the tide of global toxic waste through public awareness campaigns and advocacy of regulatory and market based initiatives that will halt environmentally damaging and socially unjust practices. [www.e-Stewards.org](http://www.e-Stewards.org), [www.ban.org](http://www.ban.org).