

THE PROBLEM

Connecticut's waste sector is, again, at a critical juncture. The current waste management infrastructure is aging and in need of expensive upgrades. Since 2016 waste flowing out of state has increased and in a few short years, if nothing changes, reliance on out of state landfills will significantly increase. This will put CT at the mercy of other states, have negative consequences for the environment, and result in greater volatility in disposal costs over the long term. Also, regional landfill capacity will shrink by 40% in the next 5 years. Then, what do we do? Ship it further away?

As we consider this pressing problem, municipalities are struggling with the ever-changing landscape of trash. Funding for many municipal recycling programs is unsustainable. Changes in the global markets have escalated costs of mixed recycling. Packaging changes and single use items have increased the amount of trash due to limited recycling options. Costs to manage items that are hard to dispose of, such as tires and gas cylinders, are rising. Many items, like sharps, smoke detectors and hazardous waste, should be removed from the waste stream but have no recovery programs.

MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about EPR, contact:

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A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION

We must reduce and rethink how we handle waste. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is one tool we should use to address our trash problem. EPR is a mandatory policy requiring manufacturers take responsibility for their product and packaging through all life cycle stages, including disposal.

CT has been at the forefront in supporting and implementing EPR programs. Leaders have brought diverse stakeholders together to develop EPR programs for electronics, mattresses, paint and thermostats. These programs have had a significant impact, saving municipalities millions of dollars in disposal costs; creating jobs; and developing reliable, more effective, financially stable, and environmentally sustainable disposal programs for these items. In addition, by involving producers in product disposal, EPR has encouraged them to redesign their products with the environment in mind.



2021 LEGISLATION

Tire EPR – Illegally dumped tires have long plagued rivers, forests and parks causing severe environmental problems, and removal and disposal has cost municipalities, taxpayers and private landowners several thousands of dollars each year. The Connecticut River Conservancy has removed over 11,000 tires from the Connecticut River Watershed in the last 15 years. Tire EPR incentivizes manufacturers to find innovative ways to recycle tires, and rethink tire design and engineering. Introduction of tire EPR in Ontario virtually eliminated illegal tire dumping, and can do the same here in CT.

Gas Cylinder EPR – CT municipalities are facing significant challenges in managing pressurized gas cylinders (1 lb – 20 lbs), including costs, explosions in trucks and at facilities, injuries, damaged equipment and litter left in state and municipal parks. The Connecticut Product Stewardship Council (CTPSC) introduced Cylinder EPR legislation in 2020, and is working with legislators and stakeholders to develop a more comprehensive bill in 2021 for a program to share the responsibility and burden of unwanted cylinders.

Paper and Packaging EPR – Although not likely to come up this session, plans are to bring stakeholders together to discuss a stewardship program for everything you put in your recycling cart. Residential recycling programs, municipal or private, need sustained financial support to maintain and expand collection. Very few programs can secure adequate funding for the level of education and investment needed for effective recycling. Other countries, including Canada and those in Europe and Asia, already have transitioned to EPR paper and packaging systems. With the fall of the global markets, producers must play a role in managing the products and packaging they profit from.