

U-Waste Product Stewardship Survey Questionnaire

Summary Narrative

Abstract

A survey of local government HHW program managers in California shows a high level of understanding of product stewardship and a desire for state legislation and state funding for local product stewardship programs.

Purpose.

“U-Waste Product Stewardship Survey Questionnaire” was sent to local government HHW program managers in California to assess the current state of local product stewardship initiatives and programs and the impact of U-Waste collection on local HHW programs in California.

Methods

The survey was made up of 13 questions. Most questions were designed to be answered quickly with a tick or number. The survey was sent by e-mail on November 29, 2007 to over three hundred local government HHW program managers on CIWMB's Form 303 e-mail distribution list. The form was also sent to the Household Hazardous Waste Information Exchange (HHWIE) and California Product Stewardship Council (CPSC) listserves on December 20th. Forms were accepted until December 30th. The survey was e-mailed as a Word document attachment, copied in the body of the e-mail and also posted on the CPSC website for download. All but two responses were returned as Word attachments (the others in the body of the email). Data were transferred to Excel spreadsheets, with one worksheet per question. Data was tallied, except answers to questions 8 and 13 were narrative in nature so answers are reported as submitted. Data on population size of jurisdictions was added to the reported data of number of households served (question 4); population data for 1/1/2007 were taken from the California Department of Finance website.

Results

Surveys from 50 jurisdictions were returned. Jurisdictions included 25 of the 487 California cities (5%), and 21 of the 58 counties (36%), and four waste authorities, and included both rural and urban jurisdictions from all parts of the state. Of the 50 respondents, two-thirds (34) were not on the CPSC listserve.

Questions 1 and 2: Private sector participation in U-waste product takeback.

- Jurisdictions reported the most private sector participation in taking back rechargeable batteries (74% of jurisdictions) and the least in taking back mercury containing thermostats (22%)
- Numbers of private sector locations ranged widely between jurisdictions. A scan of the data showed that this was also true for data normalized as the number of private sector locations per 1,000 citizens.

- Many respondents included both public and private locations, so where only a check (store names are not provided) is given, we cannot assume that those jurisdictions in fact have private collections. This may account for a surprisingly high proportion of jurisdictions reporting private sector take back locations for fluorescent lamps and bulbs.

Question 3: Public sector participation in U-waste product takeback.

- 66% of jurisdictions reported having permanent facilities accepting U-waste product discards; 34% reported having none or did not answer.
- The same proportion of jurisdictions -- 66% -- reported having mobile or one-day collection events for U-waste product discards.

Question 5: Plans to expand collection methods.

- Only seven jurisdictions indicated they had no plans to expand U-waste collection; 38 indicated plans and three did not answer.
- The most jurisdictions (20) indicated intentions to expand government financed U-waste-only projects.
- The next highest number was for expanding Producer financed retail takeback; Retail financed collection; and Nonprofit partnerships. In each case 12 jurisdictions (not all the same) indicated plans in this area.
- The fewest jurisdiction indicated plans to utilize Mail-back and Curbside collection.

Question 6: Who pays?

- Local government pays more often for U-waste product both collection and disposal than does the private sector. The number of programs in which government pays for collection and/or disposal of fluorescent lamps and bulbs and single use batteries is more than double the number of private-sector programs. For example, 68% of jurisdictions reported government funded programs for collecting fluorescent lamps (HHW facilities or events), and 32% of jurisdictions reported private-sector-funded programs. The data could not distinguish between private-collection/government-paid programs and parallel programs dealing with the same product category.
- Rechargeable battery and non-SB-20 electronics were only slightly higher for government-paid programs, compared with private sector-funded programs.
- It is possible that some respondents did not distinguish between SB-20 and non-SB 20 electronics.
- The data do not address quantities collected.

Question 9: Working with Stormwater and Wastewater Departments?

- Relatively low participation (4% to 14% of jurisdictions reporting) by stormwater and wastewater departments is evident for collection, disposal, monitoring, and funding of U-waste disposal management.
- Only in the area of education was participation higher -- 30% for storm water departments and 22% for wastewater departments.

Question 10. Most important next step.

- By far, most jurisdictions said that mandating state product stewardship laws is the most important action for dealing with U-waste products: 69% of respondents gave that as their number one priority.
- The other top priorities were: More local funding (17%); Additional private facilities (6%); and More education (8%).

Question 11. Are your elected officials aware of EPR?

- Half (52%) said they “thought so.”
- The rest were split between “don't think so” and “don't know.”
- Two questions were asked: about the respondent and elected official's understanding of EPR. Some respondents explicitly differentiated. We assume that most other responses referred to elected officials.

Question 12. Has your jurisdiction undertaken these EPR activities?

- The highest number of jurisdictions (22, or 44%) said they had developed educational materials (although it is not clear how many of these address EPR), and a similar number (21) said they had developed or were developing public-private partnerships for collecting U-waste.
- Only seven said they had passed an EPR resolution or ordinance and four said they had incorporated EPR in purchasing.

Question 13. Should CIWMB grants be used for seed money for building private infrastructure?

- Three quarters of respondents (35) said “yes.”