



**Waste Legislation**   **Sustainability**

California continues to lead on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) with several ambitious bills in 2024, including updates to existing programs and newly proposed legislation targeting marine flares, electric vehicle batteries, textiles, paint, and household hazardous waste. Despite some delays—most notably with the landmark SB 54 packaging law—the state is steadily advancing its circular economy goals by making producers accountable for product life cycles and reducing waste management costs.



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California is blazing trails on the extended producer responsibility (EPR) front, with 2024 going down as a fast-moving year. The momentum continues with another newly proposed stewardship bill this year.

Last year the legislature passed the nation's first textiles EPR bill, an electric vehicle battery law, and a marine flare bill. There were also updates to the state's paint and carpet stewardship programs.

Meanwhile, all eyes are on SB 54—California's landmark Plastic Pollution Prevention and Packaging legislation. While Governor Gavin Newsom signed it into law some time ago, it has gone back to the drawing board. The rule-making process is restarting.

EPR is central to the state's strategy for a circular economy future because it holds producers accountable for the entire life cycle, Zoe Heller, director CalRecycle, said at a recent Senate Environmental Quality Committee hearing.

"These bills support recycling and materials management goals that minimize environmental impacts and recycling convenient. But most importantly they reduce waste management costs across the board,"

she said.

Senator Catherine Blakespear, who chairs the Senate Environmental Quality Committee, paused on SB 54, widely considered the nation's most comprehensive EPR law for plastics and packaging.

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“As new EPR legislation is proposed we have opportunity to learn what has and has not worked. I believe the model developed in SB 54, which captures many universal products, has clear recycling and source reduction mandates and a strong enforcement process. These are all key to success,” she said.

The packaging law's adoption date remains unclear, since Governor Newsom rejected the first draft. The first meeting around next steps in reach of implementation is May 27, says Nick Lapis, director of advocacy, Californians Against Waste.

Here's a quick description of each bill in the spotlight today, as well as status updates:

Marine flares (SB 1066; reintroduced as SB 561). This bill, which would be the country's first, requires manufacturers to develop a plan for the collection, transportation, and safe management of expired flares.

Currently no facility in California is set up to dispose of these explosive devices, while about 174,000 of them expire every year, presenting safety and environmental issues.

SB 1066 was vetoed last year, but Senator Blakespear is working with The Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) and CalRecycle to address the governor's concerns. Some likely tweaks will be loosened collection and reporting requirements and technical assistance from the state to address collections.

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Electric vehicle batteries (SB 615). If passed, this bill would hold suppliers of electric vehicle traction batteries responsible for collecting and managing them at the end of life.

The bill prioritizes reuse, repair, and remanufacturing and requires a system to track each battery as it's handled.



SB 615 was vetoed but has been reintroduced to revisit stakeholder concerns around issues such as tracking and reporting expectations and the role of the oversight agency.

Carpet Stewardship Amendment (AB 80). AB 80 amends the established stewardship program holding producers responsible for managing end-of-life carpets.

If passed, AB 80 will include updated labeling and reporting requirements for fiber types and chemicals of concern. There will be technical updates to address ease of collection and reporting by the producer responsibility organization (PRO). And the definition of authorized collection sites will expand to more facilities, such as retailers or distribution centers, to increase access.

Textiles (SB 707). The law requires producers of clothing, footwear, and household textiles to be responsible for and fund reuse and recycling programs for their products.

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SB 707 has been signed into law, and CalRecycle will select the PRO March 2026. The estimated full implementation date is 2029.

Paint Amendment (SB 1143). The original consumer-funded bill established a program that required paint manufacturers to develop a take-back system for certain households and commercial establishments. The amendment would expand covered materials to include aerosols, nonindustrial coatings, surface adhesives, paint colorant, and thinner, among products.

The Golden State, known as a leader in stewardship policy, started looking at EPR in 2006 when residents could no longer toss universal waste in the trash, leaving the government with the charge of managing these difficult materials.

The first program passed shortly after, targeting mercury thermostats, holding their manufacturers accountable for collecting and recycling them. Then came similar laws around carpet, paint, mattresses, pharmaceuticals and sharps, packaging, and textiles.

These mandates are having impact, one material category at a time. As of February 2025, California collected 34 million gallons of paint; 11 million mattresses; one million pounds of pharmaceuticals and sharps; and one billion pounds of carpets (since the programs launched).

CalRecycle has identified what it considers key components to these program's success to include:

Identifying clear roles and responsibilities of entities who carry out the program.

- Identifying the lead oversight and enforcement agencies and other agencies with authority.
  - Including enforceable standards, such as establishing free and “convenient” collection sites and dates they must be achieved.
  - Including details in plans that describe how the industry will meet requirements (such as establishing funding mechanisms, processing and collections infrastructure, and public education).
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- Identifying reporting requirements to verify compliance.

These laws can be complicated and take a long time to develop, push through, then implement. What is happening with SB 54 –signed into law nearly three years ago—is testimony.

But Lapis believes some policies can be enacted immediately to target products or chemicals that pose a unique risk or offer a unique opportunity for substitution.

“For instance, we don’t need to wait on a comprehensive packaging solution to phase out PVC packaging, which is toxic, unrecyclable, and has readily available alternatives,” he says.

Meanwhile policy advocates are working with industry groups to push current and past legislation, still in the works, closer to implementation.

As they continue focusing on the 2024 bills a proposed household hazardous waste EPR bill (SB 501) has come on line. SB 501 passed in the Senate Environmental Quality Committee and was just heard in the Judiciary Committee April 22.

“It’s not an easy time to introduce new product regulations, given the current state of the market. EPR scopes need to carefully consider consumer costs,” Brasch says.

“But EPR policies can work. And they work best when the regulated industry stays engaged. So we look forward to ongoing conversations. We are now looking at solar panels and other products that don’t currently have a recovery management program.”

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