

EPSC's Electronics Recycling Vendor Qualification Program: demonstrating industry leadership

"We recognized in the very early stages that environmentally sound recycling of electronics would be one of the most critical elements of our stewardship program."

*Nick Aubry
SONY of Canada Ltd.*

EPSC raised the bar for electronics stewardship and pioneered an industry-wide approach to environmental responsibility with the release in 2004 of the Recycling Vendor Qualification Program (RVQP). This process, developed by EPSC's Recycling Vendor Qualification Committee, will ensure that all electronics recyclers meet a common standard of acceptable performance.

The committee drew on the expertise of a wide range of groups, and incorporated concerns that had been raised by electronics manufacturers, environmental groups and recyclers, to create this methodology for determining if recyclers process electronic equipment in a way that meets or exceeds environmental, health and safety regulations and standards in Canada. The end result is a program that follows electronic waste down to its base material, following a thorough and rigorous process to ensure environmentally sound handling of the product at all stages. EPSC's standards address specific concerns related to the recycling of electronics that are not addressed by the ISO 14000 series standards, and has created a precedent that could be used in other industries .

Sony of Canada Ltd's Environmental Manager Nick Aubry, chaired EPSC's Recycling Vendor Qualification committee, and outlines the reasons for developing the RVQP. "We recognized in the very early stages that environmentally sound recycling of electronics would be one of the most critical elements of our stewardship program. As industry leaders, we worked together and created a pioneering program designed to evaluate recyclers and to ensure electronics collected in our stewardship program are recycled in an environmentally responsible manner."

Not only is it important for manufactures to address the issue of electronic waste once it has reached its end of life, but it is also vital to ensure that products are handled safely. The RVQP has conditions that prohibits the export of waste to non-

OECD countries and prevents the use of prison labour for recycling.

Alberta adopted EPSC's recycling vendor qualification program for its operations when it introduced electronics recycling regulations. EPSC and its provincial and territorial partners will be looking for suitable vendors, willing to participate in the audit process, in order to qualify to recycle designated materials. The RVQP involves an application process, a preliminary review, and an on-site audit. Once qualified, it remains in effect for two years, and then an audit review will be required to re-qualify the vendor for another two years.

The RVQP was pilot tested when EPSC and Computers For Schools program completed a landmark project to recycle close to 200 tonnes of electronic components that had reached the end stage of their useful lifespan. EPSC demonstrated industry leadership in the area of stewardship and raised the level of expectations in this field. Before any electronics equipment was recycled, useful parts were tested, and any in good working order were set aside for reuse.

The remaining surplus electronics equipment was separated by type, e.g. plastics and metals, monitors, screens from laptops, yokes and hard drives plus potentially hazardous materials such as batteries and mercury bulbs. These materials were then shipped on skids to Noranda Recycling's facility in Brampton, Ontario for shredding and/or further separation or sorting for final recycling by another Noranda contracted sub-vendor. In all cases, the project verified the final recycled state of all the 'skid' materials to ensure they were all properly recycled.

At the conclusion of the project, EPSC President Dave Betts said "We believe, a world-wide, leading-edge standard has been set in Canada for the recycling and stewardship of surplus electronics equipment."

For more details on the Recycling Vendor Qualification Program, visit:

http://www.epsc.ca/pdfs/Vendor_Eng.pdf



EPSC's electronics recycling vendor qualification program is being praised for its environmental leadership.