MOST
POLICY INITIATIVE

Extended Producer Responsibility

How are manufacturers responsible for their products' disposal?

Research Highlights

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) holds companies financially or physically responsible for the end-of-life disposal and recycling of the products they create.

Thirty-three states and D.C. have enacted EPR laws covering products including electronics, batteries, and paints.

Outcomes of EPR programs vary, as some increased recycling, while others did not change manufacturing design.

EPR requires manufacturers to manage product disposal.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) laws require companies to finance or physically manage disposal of certain environmentally harmful products at the end of their lifespan (Nesbitt 2025). These laws aim to reduce the product's environmental impact, lower the financial strain on local waste management, and incentivize companies to reduce waste in their product designs (Knowlton et al. 2025, Lorang et al. 2022).

EPR laws use a combination of policy approaches. One approach requires manufacturers to manage collection and disposal of old products, known as take-back requirements (Knowlton et al. 2025, Kaffine & O'Reilly 2013). Another requires companies to provide the government with documentation on product sales, collection, and recycling rates, and educate consumers about proper product disposal. Some laws include recycling targets for the producers (Gregg & Halliday 2025). Governments may impose taxes, fees, or penalties on producers to fund programs and recycling infrastructure, with fee structures designed to encourage environmentally conscious design changes.

Some laws require companies to join a Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO), which develops action plans and coordinates companies to ensure compliance with varying regulations (Edwards et al. 2026, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 2024). PROs are often non-profit organizations and can also manage fee collection and fund distribution to governments (Gregg & Halliday 2025).

Thirty-three states have EPR laws.

Thirty-three states, including MO, and D.C. have passed EPR laws for different types of products (Product Stewardship Initiative (PSI) n.d., **Figure 1**). MO is one of 24 states that has an EPR law for electronic products. MO law requires computer product manufacturers to implement a recovery plan and submit it to the Department

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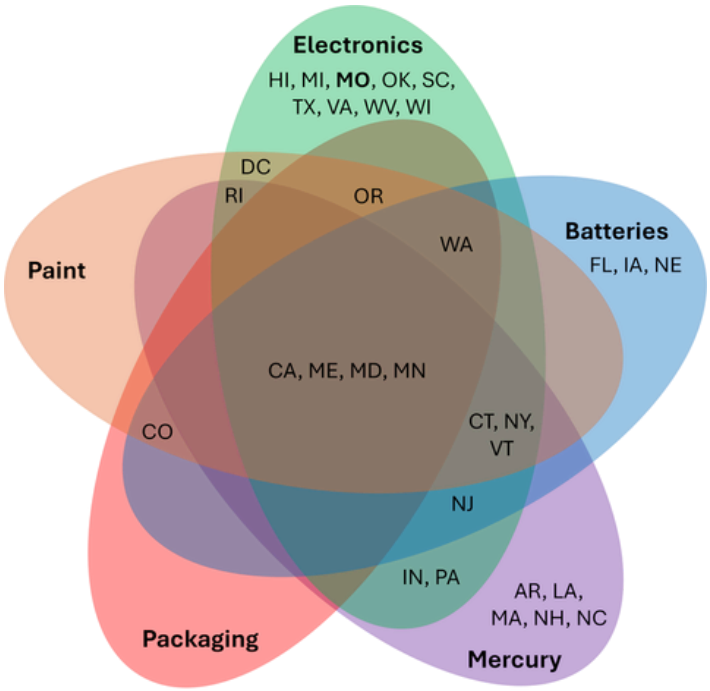

Figure 1. States with Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) laws. Thirty-three states and D.C. have passed laws requiring greater responsibility from producers of certain products for the end-of-life disposal of those products. These laws cover products containing mercury, electronic products, paints, batteries, and packaging, among others. Information compiled from Product Stewardship Institute n.d.

of Natural Resources (DNR) (RSMo §260.1050 2008). This plan, which can be coordinated with other manufacturers, must make recycling accessible to consumers at no additional charge. Manufacturers must also submit annual reports to DNR on the amount of collection and recycling. Products cannot be sold in the state without DNR's approval of the manufacturer's recovery plan, and DNR may assess a penalty for noncompliance. DNR provides recycling guidance for approved manufacturers, which includes 56 brands as of 2026 (MO Department of Natural Resources n.d.)

Other products covered by state EPR laws include (Nesbitt 2025):

- mercury-containing products (16 states)
- batteries (14)
- paint (12 and D.C.)
- packaging and paper products (7)

All EPR laws on packaging have been implemented in the 2020s (PSI n.d.). The U.S. has no federal EPR regulations, though the Environmental Protection Agency is developing an EPR framework for batteries (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 2026, Nesbitt 2025). National EPR regulations exist in other countries, including the entire European Union, India, and Japan (EUR-Lex 2025, Fujikura 2025, Central Pollution Control Board n.d.).

EPR laws' effectiveness varies, and data reporting is inconsistent.

EPR programs vary in effectiveness depending on the intended outcomes. European plastic packaging EPR programs increased recycling rates and shifted cost of waste management from taxpayers to producers (Lorang et al. 2022). EPR policies also increased transparency in material disposal and created steady funding for recycling programs (OECD 2024). A study of EPR fees charged in Ontario, Canada, found differing fees for packaging materials did not affect the manufacturers' material choices (Lakhan 2016).

Inconsistent data reporting limits EPR program evaluation (Knowlton et al. 2025, Monier et al. 2014). For example, in 2018, the 24 states with electronics EPR collected nearly 594 million pounds of electronics products, including 119,000 pounds in MO (Electronics Recycling Coordination Clearinghouse n.d.). However, 2018 was most recent year all participating states reported data.

MOST Policy Initiative is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that provides nonpartisan research information to members of the Missouri General Assembly upon request. This Science Note is intended for informational purposes and does not indicate support or opposition to a particular bill or policy approach. A full list of references used in this Science Note may be found at https://mostpolicyinitiative.org/science-note/extended-producer-responsibility/. Please contact info@mostpolicyinitiative.org with any questions.

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