

**T-6.3**  
**SWANA TECHNICAL POLICY**  
**Safe Recycling of Electronic Waste**

**I. Background**

Discarded electronics or “e-waste” — including TVs and other video and audio equipment, computers and computer peripherals, mobile and handheld devices, and other devices that are powered by an electrical current, cord or battery are a universal waste (as defined in the United States) or hazardous waste. Some reasons for ensuring responsible management of electronic waste are:

- Increases in the use of lithium-ion and other batteries in electronics that can cause thermal runaway have led to more fires and hazardous disposal;
- Increase in fires has led to an increase in safety concerns for essential workers;
- Manufacturing electronics requires significant energy and uses valuable materials, making recycling highly beneficial from an environmental perspective and for the preservation of rare earth minerals;
- Contain toxic substances that warrant greater care for safe management; and
- Rapid growth and changes in the market have led to a proliferation of discarded products, including single-use electronics such as electronic smoking devices.

Electronics contain rare earth metals and other valuable materials, such as engineered plastics, all of which require considerable energy to extract, process and manufacture from virgin resources. Reusing and recycling electronics ensures we maintain the highest and best value of these materials. It is widely accepted that making and remaking electronics in North America helps ensure an adequate domestic supply of manufacturing materials, such as rare earth minerals needed to manufacture the next generation of products. Reusing and recycling electronics in North America also supports the local economy, job growth, and resilient supply chains. Recovery and reuse of electronics conserves resources, and reduces waste, pollution and greenhouse gases.

## II. Policy Position

SWANA supports the following policy positions on responsible recycling of electronics:

1. Regional and local governments should endeavor to assure that flexible and cost-effective recycling options that meet applicable state, provincial, and local requirements are available to all households and businesses within their jurisdictions;
2. Federal, state, provincial, and local governments, non-governmental organizations, and businesses should assure that all electronics used are diverted from disposal and managed by certified third-party recyclers which prioritize reuse over recycling and sell to responsible end-markets that do not end up burdening local governments and other countries with generated electronic waste.
3. All levels of government should require that recycling facilities comply with enforceable worker safety, public health and environmental standards. Requiring recycling facilities to be certified under recognized, recycling certification programs would facilitate compliance;
4. Federal and international programs and conventions should prohibit the international shipment of e-waste to facilities that do not comply with standards for worker safety and public health and the environment, and to countries that do not have regulatory programs to enforce such standards; and
5. Provide convenient and free disposal opportunities for residential customers to utilize for their e-waste at the end of life. EPR or other policy tools may provide funding options and opportunities.
6. If a state, province, or local government chooses to implement a disposal ban on electronics or any subset, the state, province, or local government should ensure prior to implementing a disposal ban on electronics, infrastructure must be in place to regulate, collect, store, transport, re-use, recycle or remanufacture the electronics. Solid waste facilities should not be held liable for improper disposal of electronics under a ban if best practices are followed as described in item II.7. of this policy
7. Disposal bans should include provisions to protect owner/operators of solid waste facilities from liability for inadvertent disposal of e-waste that are not part of the diversion program, as long as they carry out waste screening programs in accordance with the provision of the facility permits and have made good faith efforts to post signs and notify haulers that certain electronics are not accepted by the facility.

### **III. Regulations and Public Policies**

Refer to local, state, provincial, and federal laws, regulations, and other applicable policies.