

The e-Stewards Certification Program



In 2002, the Basel Action Network (BAN) and the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition released the report and film entitled “*Exporting Harm*”, exposing the horrific “recycling” of toxic electronic waste (“e-waste”) in China. A year later the groups launched a program designed to identify globally responsible recyclers known as “The Electronic Recycler’s Pledge of True Stewardship,” and in 2005 documented the final disposition of equipment supposedly exported for reuse and repair to Nigeria, in a film and report entitled, “*The Digital Dump: Exporting Reuse and Abuse to Africa*,” where 75% of ‘reusable’ equipment received was useless waste. In 2008, BAN revisited China with CBS TV News magazine “60 Minutes,” and the resulting program revealed that the situation there had become far worse, with deadly toxic e-waste processing and dumping operations spread even further into the farmlands.

Unfortunately, the e-waste export crisis is worsening steadily as it continues to not only victimize communities and environments in developing countries, but also hurt the truly responsible recyclers in the industry through cost externalization, and the resulting unfair competition.

While the Pledge program has been very successful to date, it has become clear that a more rigorous, comprehensive program was needed to truly differentiate the recycling industry leaders from those less scrupulous – a certification program that customers can rely on.

e-Stewards: The ‘Gold Standard’

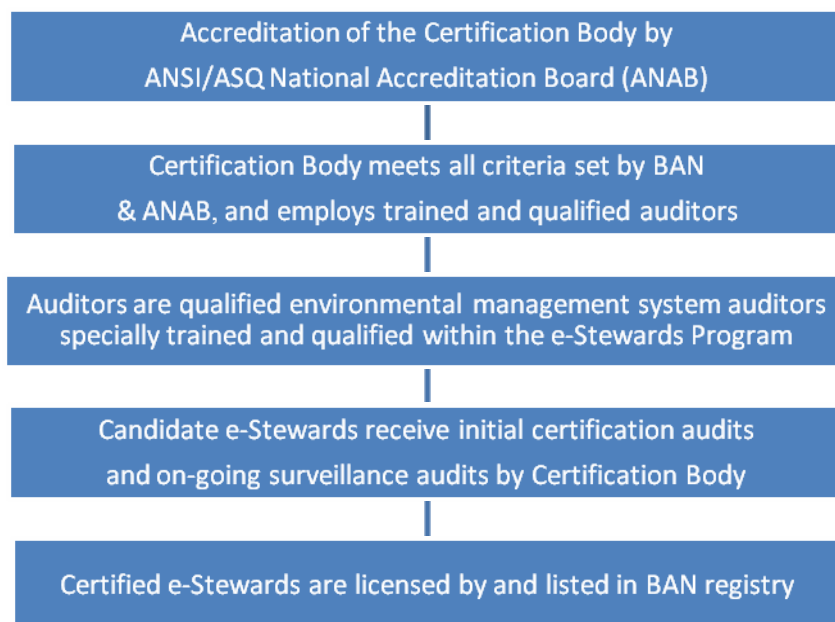
In answer to this pressing need, The Basel Action Network has now created an electronics recycling standard in conjunction with some of the best companies in the industry, experts in worker health and safety, and data security. Already hailed as the ‘gold standard’, the e-Stewards Standard for Responsible Recycling and Reuse of Electronic Equipment is written with an international scope in mind and is consistent with international waste trade rules, social accountability, and international environmental management system norms. Imbedded within the e-Stewards Standard is the complete set of requirements of ISO 14001 (for environmental management systems), plus health and safety system requirements, Basel Convention and OECD trade rule compliance requirements, and industry-specific performance requirements. It is designed to be a “*one stop shop*” for conscientious recyclers wishing to differentiate themselves from unscrupulous operators that have unfortunately dominated the industry landscape to date. A guidance document is provided within the Standard to facilitate understanding and

implementation of a management system that meets world class standards. Here is a sampling of some key requirements of the e-Stewards Standard, which must be met for certification:

1. The requirements of ISO 14001 must be met in full;
2. Health and safety system requirements, comparable to ISO 18001, specific to managing e-waste;
3. The principles in the global social accountability standard, SA 8000, must be met; and
4. Electronics recycling industry performance requirements must be met, including:
 - Strict control of exportation of hazardous electronic wastes, in conformance with the Amendment to the Basel Convention and other existing laws;
 - Safe on-site handling of hazardous e-waste and other problematic components and materials, as well as workplace toxins monitoring;
 - Accountability for the entire downstream recycling chain for the toxic materials;
 - When data security services are offered, they must meet the NIST 800-88 Guidelines for Media Sanitization, and provide customers with indemnity;
 - Clear requirements for legitimate re-use and refurbishment;
 - Restrictions on disposal options for toxic materials and prohibition on use of prison and child labor;
 - Minimum requirements for insurance provisions;
 - Collection and reporting of data relative to the industry for benchmarking and improvement; and
 - Provision of site closure plans when potentially hazardous processing technologies have been used.

e-Stewards' Accredited Certification System

BAN has designed and developed a system by which recyclers, refurbishers, and processors may obtain independent third-party certification of their conformance with the e-Stewards Standard. No claim for conformance to this Standard is legitimate unless it follows the designated process, described below:



Independent Accreditation and Certification

BAN has developed a global standard that raises the bar for electronics recyclers and allows those who meet the standard to be formally recognized. Recognition derives from leveraging the established, accredited third-party certification system and adapting it to a unique set of requirements for the e-waste recycling industry. This certification will first be offered in the United States and Canada through the ANSI/ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB), which is internationally recognized as the source for accreditation for the certification of management systems in the United States. Its recognition extends globally through its membership and leadership within the International Accreditation Forum and through bilateral and multi-cooperative agreements with other leading national accreditation bodies abroad.

The Certification Bodies that are authorized to participate in the e-Stewards program are all ISO 14001 accredited bodies which have demonstrated background in both the electronics and recycling industries. Each qualifies through a series of independent and ongoing reviews, audits, and witnessed assessments as meeting the rigorous e-Stewards accreditation requirements.

The auditors employed by e-Stewards Certification Bodies are individually certified to perform environmental management system audits within the accredited third-party system. Furthermore, each one has been trained through a course specially developed by SAI-Global -- the premiere training organization in the industry. Participation through continual development courses assures that auditors remain abreast of recycling industry technical and operational advancements.

Certification to the e-Stewards Standard requires that qualified auditors and accredited certification bodies conduct an initial assessment to verify conformance to the Standard. Following this, the e-Steward will demonstrate ongoing conformance to auditors through annual, on-site surveillance audits. During the process, valuable metrics, reported to a BAN-designated central data base, will provide an opportunity for e-Stewards to benchmark their progress against industry, and document their improvements in responsible recycling, as well as provide worker exposure data to inform future revisions to the Standard.

Certified e-Stewards will be able to distinguish themselves in the industry, providing customers with a high level of confidence that they operate in conformity with the world's highest principles of environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and international law.

Program Funding and Development

In order to fund the development of the certification program, BAN began charging a licensing fee in 2009 for those already qualified under its Pledge program for the continued use of the e-Stewards' name and logo. In addition, charitable foundations and a group of 14 recyclers, asset recovery companies, and end processors called the 'e-Steward Founders' (listed at www.e-stewards.org) provided gifts or grants explicitly for the development of the independently audited e-Stewards Certification program.

Timeline

All aspects of the certification system will go through a final verification process in 2009, resulting in the first certifications and a full launch of the program by early 2010, at the latest.

For more information visit: www.e-stewards.org

Basel Action Network
122 S. Jackson St., Ste. 320
Seattle, WA. 98104
Phone: 206.652.5555 Fax: 888.541.0728
Web: www.ban.org
Email: inform@ban.org