



FAQs: e-Stewards® Certification Background

What is e-Stewards certification?

e-Stewards is an accredited, third-party audited certification program for electronics recyclers, refurbishers, and processors, currently available in developed countries. At the core of the program is a detailed electronics recycling standard, which is based on international law and a requirement to keep toxic materials out of landfills, incinerators, prisons, and developing countries throughout the recycling chain. Equally important is the accredited, independent certification of a recycler's conformance to this standard. The Basel Action Network (BAN), a non-profit NGO, created the e-Stewards certification at the request of leaders in the recycling industry.

Why was the e-Stewards Initiative first created?

In 2001, BAN discovered the global problem created by recyclers exporting hazardous electronic waste to developing countries. After the initial BAN report and documentary film entitled "Exporting Harm," BAN sought to identify and differentiate responsible recyclers from the irresponsible exporters so that consumers would be assured that their e-waste would not be exported.

In 2003, BAN launched the *Electronics Recyclers Pledge of True Stewardship* – a 10-point standard and qualification process to identify recyclers upholding principles of responsible recycling. The Pledge required companies to behave as if the US had ratified the Basel Convention and the Basel Ban Amendment – two internationally agreed legal treaties to control and prevent trade in toxic wastes.

Many North American recyclers joined the Pledge and the name was changed from the "pledge" to "e-Stewards Initiative." Also, the pledge qualification process evolved from a "phone audit" with interviews of downstream vendors to the addition of paperwork documenting shipping and receiving throughout the recycling chain.

Why did the Pledge evolve into a Certification?

Over time, consumers increasingly demanded responsible recyclers that refused to export their collected e-wastes. Recyclers desired an even more robust third-party audited program to prevent cheating. Recyclers also sought a "one-stop" standard for truly responsible electronics recyclers.

What is R2 (Responsible Recycling Practices) and why were two standards created in the US?

One of the founding principles of the R2 negotiation was that the standard would ensure that the laws of importing countries would not be violated. Because the flood of e-wastes from the US to developing countries violates international and national laws, BAN believed that this principle would be a first step to stemming the toxic tide.

Unfortunately, in the late stages of the negotiations, certain stakeholders demanded that the R2 Practices deviate from the founding principle of not violating other nations' laws. Environmental NGOs objected, but the EPA failed to intervene. At that point, the environmental groups left the negotiations and, at the

request of leaders in the industry, BAN began to create the e-Stewards Certification program, which would include all the components to ensure responsible recycling.

How is the e-Stewards certification different than the R2 Practices certification program?

- The e-Stewards Standard implements international waste trade laws, requires ISO 14001 certification, and was written for international application.
- The e-Stewards Standard forbids the use of municipal waste systems as well as the use of prison labor for hazardous electronics.
- The e-Stewards Standard is held by a legal, public interest entity which ensures quality control, a regular and transparent updating process, a multidisciplinary Leadership Council and requires consistent professional training for all of its auditors and certifying bodies.
- The e-Stewards Initiative provides widespread promotion, including the e-Stewards Enterprise program, rewarding large corporate and institutional customers for using only e-Stewards Recyclers.
- e-Stewards is the only program created by, and with the support of, the environmental community and is now endorsed by over 70 environmental organizations around the world.

Further differences in the standards are found on the e-Stewards.org website.

How is the WEEELABEX Standard in Europe and how does it compare to e-Stewards?

WEEELABEX is a standard being prepared by the WEEE Forum for use by European recyclers, and it is not expected to be completed in its entirety for several years. It is still too early to know what performance standards and verification system will be utilized. WEEELABEX is largely driven by the WEEE Directive of the European Union and will only be applicable in the European Union.

Was the e-Stewards Standard created by a multi-stakeholder process?

Yes, although not by a Standards Development Organization (neither R2 nor e-Stewards utilized a formal SDO process). To create the e-Stewards Standard, BAN worked with a wide variety of recyclers, asset recovery companies, and experts in health and safety, certification, and data security. Formal multi-stakeholder processes unfortunately create a product that represents the lowest common denominator of all actors. This was the case in the creation of the R2 Practices. The R2 Practices became so weak that all environmental organizational stakeholders were forced to walk out of the process when the standard resulted in being contrary to international law, allowing the use of prison labor, and the use of municipal landfills for the deposit of hazardous wastes.

Are companies adopting the e-Stewards Standard?

Yes. Since its official launch in April of 2010, more than 74 electronics recycling facilities are either certified today or have contracted with certification bodies to become certified. Major corporations, such as Samsung, Wells Fargo, and Bank of America choose e-Stewards recyclers because it reduces their costs and offers them the highest assurances possible. The e-Stewards Certification is supported by over 70 environmental organizations including Greenpeace USA, Sierra Club and the Natural Resources Defense Council. Furthermore, the US EPA has stated that they support both the R2 and e-Stewards certification programs.