

# WASTE MANAGEMENT

A CONSUMER CONNECT INITIATIVE

## Beyond CSR



The problem of e-waste management should be dealt with a greater seriousness than just a mere statute, feels  
**BK Soni**

A lot has been talked about the problems associated with the end of life electrical and electronic equipment or (e-waste). Now, the time has come to aggressively implement effective and environment friendly solution to address this ever-growing problem. As we all know, that e-waste has unique combination of hazardous substances and reusable commodities and therefore it is important from environmental and ecological points of view that both these elements are recovered in a safe and secured manner.

Looking at the unique features of e-waste, it is important to realise that proper treatment of this waste is not restricted to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) alone but much beyond that covers Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) responsibilities together.

ESG may not necessarily be a part of the legal framework but is certainly a part of responsibility of one and all in the best interest of our environment. In all probability, I feel that going forward ESG compliance will prove to be profitable rather than cost because better environment will certainly add to greater productivity.

At this point, it is important to look at a significant provision in the proposed draft rules for e-waste management, which talks about Extended Producers' Responsibility (EPR). This particular provision may help in achieving greater transparency on the movement of end of life electronic and electrical equipment and lead to incremental quantum going for organised recycling. This provision may go a long way provided used equipment do

not reach to unorganised players for a consideration but are returned to the producers on expiry. EPR might lead to Advance Recycling Fees (ARF) and if such mechanism appears to discharge the responsibility of reverse logistic and recycling, such funds, so collected from the consumers may be used for setting up logistic and recycling infrastructure across the nation. This model may help in achieving greater ESG.

It may also not be out of place to discuss whether environment is a local issue or a global issue. It has been noticed that

lots of e-waste moves from one to other countries primarily because of high costs of recovery at certain places and lack of technology at the other. But countries like India are capable to take care of both if the viable business model appears out of the same, in such case, investment in the venture does not become a question mark.

Under such circumstance, it may be pertinent to have open discussion on such possibilities where cross country movement is made possible for recycling purposes only and to provide recovered commodities back to the main stream of the industries and avoid deeper mining.

Eco Recycling Ltd, the first e-waste recycling facility granted registration by the Central Pollution Control Board and the first facility received consent to operate from the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board is presently serving to more than 300 corporate entities across nation and providing end to end solution right from collection till the disposal of hazardous substances.

It is proud to share that Ecoreco is about to launch its Precious Metal Recovery facility, the first indigenously developed technology for recovery of precious metals.

With the implementation of the same and on 100% capacity utilisation, Ecoreco will be able to process 1200 tons of printed circuit boards per annum on one shift basis.

This will be another feather in the cap of Ecoreco, which will be in the same league of developed facilities anywhere globally. This will also be beneficial from the national exchequers point of view when India will be able to retain its precious metals in the country itself.

(Soni is chairman and managing director, Eco Recycling Ltd)

## E-WASTE BASICS

Electronic waste, 'e-waste' or 'Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment' ('WEEE') is a waste consisting of any broken or unwanted electrical or electronic appliance.

>> It is a point of concern considering that many components of such equipment are considered toxic and are not biodegradable.  
>> India generates close to 500,000 tons e-waste per annum. It is expected to touch a million tones in 2011

### SOURCES OF WEEE

- >> IT & telecom equipment
- >> Large household appliances
- >> Small household appliances
- >> Consumer & lighting equipment
- >> Electrical & electronic tools
- >> Toys, leisure & sports equipment
- >> Medical devices
- >> Monitoring & control instruments

### FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO E-WASTE

A relatively new category of waste brought along with the high-tech boom, e-waste includes all types of electronic equipment/products which have become obsolete or have been discarded due to:

- >> Advancement in technology
- >> Changes in fashion, style, status or perception
- >> Nearing the end of their useful life
- >> Generally understood to refer to any old, obsolete, end-of-life appliances using electricity which have been disposed off by their owners

### MAJOR TOXIC ELEMENTS IN E-WASTE

Due to the pervading reach of information technology in trade and commerce, computer waste is the most significant of all e-waste, along with televisions and cellular phones

- >> E-waste contains both valuable as well as harmful components
- >> Valuable components include precious metals such as gold, silver, copper, palladium, etc.
- >> Harmful substances include lead, mercury, cadmium, etc.

