

Pollution Prevention Opportunities for Extended Producer Environmental Responsibility in the Construction Industry

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Automobiles, computers and packaging have to be taken back by manufacturers in Europe after consumers do not want them any more. This regulation has had profound effects on the way industrial products are designed and manufactured, and has led to an increased attention to the environmental effects of product takeback. It will not be before too long that extended producer environmental responsibility will become public policy in the U.S. as well. California, traditionally at the forefront of environmental legislation, may become a test ground for product takeback in the U.S.

But what would happen if a mandate required not only our cars to be taken back by the auto manufacturers, but our homes, bridges, and dams by the construction companies that built them? This research project will analyze the technical conditions, economic effects, and the possible environmental implications of mandating takeback of construction materials and facilities. In particular, we will study the opportunities for pollution prevention and reduction of toxic emissions as a result of construction products returning to construction companies at the end of their useful life.