Illinois Electronics Recycling Program: County Opt-In and Implementation Best Practices



Prepared by: Advisory Electronics Recycling Task Force
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This document specifies best practices for counties participating in Illinois's Consumer Electronics Recycling Act (CERA) program (415 ILCS 151/). Counties that elect to opt into the program play a critical role in providing residents with convenient, safe, and environmentally responsible opportunities to recycle covered electronic devices (CEDs). The Opt-In and Implementation Best Practices are required to be submitted by the Advisory Electronics Recycling Task Force (Task Force) for the posting on the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) website by November 1 annually for collections occurring in the next program year, as specified in Section 1-85 of CERA.

Under CERA, manufacturers of covered electronic devices fund the collection, transportation, and recycling of eligible residential electronics through a statewide network of collection sites and one-day collection events. Counties that choose to participate in the program help ensure that residents have access to these recycling opportunities while supporting waste diversion, resource recovery, and environmental protection goals.

The best practices contained in this document are intended to assist counties in planning, implementing, and overseeing successful electronics recycling programs. These recommendations are designed to promote safe operations, improve program efficiency, and enhance overall experience for residents and participating partners.

The recommendations contained herein were developed by members of the Advisory Electronics Recycling Task Force with input from counties, collectors, recyclers, manufacturers, and other program stakeholders. The practices provided in this document are highly recommended but are not requirements unless otherwise specified in CERA or established by applicable local, state, or federal regulations.

Counties participating in the Illinois Electronics Recycling Program should also refer to the Illinois Electronics Recycling Collection Sites: Collection Best Practices document for detailed guidance regarding the collection, handling, packaging, storage, transportation, and shipment of covered electronic devices. Together, these documents provide a framework for establishing and maintaining effective electronics recycling opportunities throughout Illinois.

1. Program Participation Best Practices

Opting In is the process by which a county formally commits to participating in the Illinois Electronics Recycling Program for the upcoming year. By opting in, a county becomes eligible to receive manufacturer funded recycling services, including transportation, packaging materials, and processing of CEDs. Counties choose to opt-in because it provides residents with a safe outlet for unwanted electronics, prevents open dumping, supports environmental goals, and eliminates the need for counties to independently fund electronics recycling programs.

Prior to submitting an Opt-In form, counties should:

a) Evaluate local demand for electronics recycling services by reviewing prior participation levels, resident inquiries, illegal dumping concerns, and available collection opportunities.
b) Assess available staffing, equipment, facilities, and operational capacity before electing to participate in the program.
c) Review statutory collection obligations based on population density. CERA requires counties to provide a minimum number of collection sites based on population density when opting-in to the program. One permanent site is equivalent to four one-day events, giving counties flexibility in how they meet their obligations. (Appendix A)
    - Counties may request waivers to reduce the number of required sites or events via formal request/notice sent to the IEPA or Manufacturer Clearinghouse. Waivers may be granted for reasons such as low population, geographic challenges, limited staffing capacity, or the presence of a well-functioning permanent site that already meets local needs
d) Consider the use of permanent collection sites where practical, as permanent sites may provide greater convenience for residents.
e) Identify potential collection locations before submitting the Opt-In Form.
f) Coordinate with municipalities, regional planning agencies, solid waste agencies, and other local partners when evaluating collection opportunities.
g) Review available program funding and account for potential underweight trailer fees associated with shipments from one-day events that do not meet minimum transportation weight targets. Each county is given a waiver of 2 underweight trailer fees for load weight of less than 18,000 pounds per year from one-day events.

2. Compliance and Administrative Best Practices

To maintain compliance throughout the program process, counties should:

a) Submit Opt-In Form by March 1 of the preceding year, counties submit the Opt-In Form with proposed sites to Illinois EPA and the Illinois Manufacturer Clearinghouse.
    - The form must include proposed locations of either permanent sites or one-day collection event locations that are likely to be available during the next program year.
b) Maintain communication with IEPA, the Manufacturer Clearinghouse, and assigned recyclers.

c) Provide formal notice to the Manufacturer Clearinghouse on decreases to the number of program collection sites or events below the "Minimum Site Required" or substitutions of sites for one-day events.
d) Ensure all participating collectors have completed any required registrations under CERA. In the event the county is acting as their own collector, ensure the Collector, Recycler, Refurbisher Registration is submitted by January 1 of the applicable Program Year.
e) Ensure collection activities comply with applicable local, state, and federal requirements. Follow the Collectors Best Practices where applicable.
f) Maintain records related to collection activities, shipments, event operations, and program participation. This includes bills of lading and other shipment documentation for all CED shipments.
g) Ensure the registered collector for the applicable program year submits the Collection and Transportation Report by March 1st of the following year.

3. Planning and Coordination Best Practices

The Illinois Manufacturing Clearinghouse will finalize which assigned Group Plan a county will be assigned to by July 1 of the preceding program year. Once assigned, counties should:

a) Begin planning several months before collection activities to ensure location, supplies, and labor will be available at the site/event.
b) Review previous program performance and participation data to estimate needs and relay this information to the assigned Recycler to ensure adequate supplies are provided.
c) Coordinate schedules and logistics with assigned recyclers.
d) Establish responsibilities among county staff, contractors, municipalities, and volunteers.
e) Develop contingency plans for weather, traffic, staffing shortages, and equipment failures.
f) Establish procedures for communicating schedule changes, weather-related delays, postponements, or event cancellations.
g) Consider appointment-based collection systems where appropriate.
h) Coordinate a plan to acquire the following equipment:
    - Forklifts or pallet jacks
    - Cones and signage
    - Radios or communication devices
    - PPE (gloves, vests, closed toe shoes)
    - Secure storage areas

4. Collection Site Selection Best Practices

Counties must select locations that support safe, efficient, and accessible electronics recycling. These are conditions a site should consider in order to function as a safe and effective CED collection location:

a) The site must have a stable, flat surface such as asphalt or concrete. This ensures safe movement of pallets, gaylords, pallet jacks, and forklifts.
b) There must be distinct, unobstructed vehicle entry and exit routes to maintain smooth traffic flow and prevent congestion or unsafe conditions.

c) The site must have enough room for vehicles to line up safely without spilling onto public roads. This reduces traffic hazards and keeps the event orderly.
d) Coordinate with assigned recycler about preferred methos of handling broken or pre-dismantled items. Some recyclers have varying preferences.
e) The location must provide space for sufficient area for staging and containers, separate from residential drop zone:
    - Pallets
    - Gaylords
    - Staging areas
    - Recycler truck access
f) The site must be in an area that avoids unnecessary risk, such as:
    - School zones during pickup/drop-off times
    - High traffic intersections during peak hours
    - Areas with limited visibility or unsafe turning movements
g) At the end of one-day events, the site should be properly cleaned, signage removed, pallets secured and stored/loaded and recycler pick up schedule confirmed.
h) All collection and transportation data should be retained for the yearly Collection and Transportation Report due March 1st of the following year.

During the collection events, residents may bring non-covered CEDs. Many common household electronics such as cell phones, microwaves, small appliances, and power tools are not covered by CERA. Opt-in organizations may choose to accept these non-CEDs, but they must keep them separate from CEDs and may be charged a fee by their recycler for processing them. Counties should evaluate staffing, space, and cost implications before accepting non-CEDs. It is recommended that the site or one-day event have a photo or a list of non-covered CEDs to ensure the site will not incur fees from the recycler. Accepting these devices is up to collector discretion and should be discussed with the recycler prior to the event.

5. Staffing and Volunteer Management Best Practices

It is recommended that host Counties utilize staff and volunteers to run the event to minimize the cost of the event to the hosting agency. Roles include traffic control, item screening, loading, and resident assistance. Training Should Cover: Accepted CEDs, Prohibited items, Safety protocols and Customer service. To ensure this, counties should:

a) Ensure sufficient staffing is available during all collection activities.
b) Assign personnel to specific operational functions, including traffic management, resident assistance, material screening, data collection, and site supervision.
c) Provide training regarding accepted materials, prohibited materials, safety procedures, statutory requirements, and customer service expectations.
d) Ensure all staff and volunteers have access to necessary safety equipment and supplies, including planning for extra necessary equipment.
e) Utilize appointment-based event systems with residents remaining in vehicles to allow for an orderly environment for the site staff.
f) Make it easy for volunteers to service the event - Provide supplies, instructions, and a simple sign-up link.

Examples of staff or volunteers that counties may utilize for sites or events:

a) County Staff
   - May use reliable and trained staff which is ideal for permanent sites.

b) Contractors
   - Third-party contractors are useful when counties lack staff capacity. The county is responsible for any fees associated with hiring contractors for collection. This is where the hosting agency will incur fees.

c) Volunteers
   - Environmental nonprofits — Groups focused on recycling, conservation, and clean-ups often run or join collection events.
   - Local charities — Many charities list volunteer opportunities for drives and collections through platforms like Mobilize, which aggregates events from grassroots groups and nonprofits.
   - Schools and youth groups — Schools frequently participate in service days and some organize, and even facilitate, school volunteer days.
   - Corporate volunteer programs — Companies often sponsor employee volunteer days and will send teams to help with community drives.
   - Community service organizations — Groups such as Rotary, Lions Clubs, Kiwanis, and neighborhood associations regularly support local collection events. Volunteer directories like The Volunteer Center help connect these groups with opportunities.
   - Faith-based organizations — Churches, mosques, synagogues, and interfaith coalitions often organize or join donation drives and community cleanups.
   - Civic and municipal groups — EMA, Highway Dep., Probation Office, Park districts, libraries, and city sustainability offices often collaborate on recycling or donation drives.
   - Reach out to local government — Village offices often maintain lists of civic groups and environmental committees.

6. Public Outreach and Education Best Practices

Effective communication increases participation and reduces confusion. It's recommended that the events and sites be promoted early to allow for public awareness and to allow organizations to have time to mobilize volunteers.

For more details on Education and Awareness Best Practices, reference the Education and Awareness Best Practices (link) made available by the Illinois Task Force.

7. Site Operations Oversight Best Practices

Regardless of whether the county is hosting the events themselves or have a contracted third-party collector hosting the event, counties should:

a) Ensure collection sites operate in accordance with Collection Best Practices.

b) Confirm that appropriate packaging materials, equipment, and transportation arrangements are available.
c) Ensure collected materials are protected from weather, theft, vandalism, and unauthorized access.
d) Verify that covered electronic devices and non-covered materials are managed separately.
e) Coordinate with recyclers regarding loading and shipment schedules.
f) Address operational issues promptly to minimize disruption to residents and collection activities.
g) Document any incidents, operational challenges, or unusual circumstances encountered during collection activities.
h) Advertise the site or event to ensure public awareness.

Detailed collection, packaging, storage, transportation, and material handling procedures are addressed in the Illinois Electronics Recycling Collection Sites: Collection Best Practices document and should be followed by all collectors and collection site operators.

8. Event Evaluation and Continuous Improvement Best Practices

Counties should:

a) Review participation levels and operational performance.
b) Evaluate staffing needs, traffic management effectiveness, and site suitability.
c) Obtain feedback from residents, staff, volunteers, collectors, recyclers, and other partners.
d) Review outreach effectiveness and public awareness efforts.
e) Use program data to improve future collections and support future Opt-In decisions.
f) Record weight collected for future planning reference.
g) Report any issues to the assigned recycler.

Appendix A – Statutory Collection Site Requirements

Population Based Minimum Number of Required Sites

Population Density (individuals/sq. mile)	Minimum Sites Required
0–249	1
250–499	2
500–749	3
750–999	4
1,000–4,999	5
5,000+	15

Note: Municipalities with over 1,000,000 residents receive 10 additional sites.

Appendix B- Definitions

Collector: A person who collects residential CEDs at any program collection site or one-day collection event and prepares them for transport. A collector may also be a transporter, refurbisher, or recycler with responsibility for the disassembly, demanufacture, or recycling of electronics; for purposes of this best practices document, only the collector aspects of such entities are addressed.

Covered Electronic Device (CED): Any computer, computer monitor, television, printer, electronic keyboard, facsimile machine, videocassette recorder, portable digital music player that has memory capability and is battery powered, digital video disc player, video game console, electronic mouse, scanner, digital converter box, cable receiver, satellite receiver, digital video disc recorder, home audio component, peripheral or small-scale server sold at retail. Exclusions to the definition of CED are included in CERA.

Collection Site: A physical location registered under CERA where residents may deliver covered electronic devices for recycling during regularly scheduled operating hours.

One-Day Collection Event: A temporary collection opportunity held on a specific date and location for the purpose of accepting covered electronic devices from residents. Used as a substitute for a program collection site.

Illinois Manufacturer Clearinghouse: The organization designated to coordinate manufacturer compliance activities, county opt-ins, site assignments, and other administrative functions associated with the Illinois Electronics Recycling Program.

Recycler: Any person who transports or subsequently recycles residential CEDs that have been collected and prepared for transport by a collector at any program collection site or one-day collection event.