

Green Chemistry & EPR

Green Chemistry and Extended Producer Responsibility are parallel movements heading toward a similar goal. Green Chemistry aims to find alternatives to toxic **chemicals** (often in products) while EPR focuses on improving design of toxic and throw-away **products** by extending producers' responsibility.

- Both involve policies that aim to "**green**" **design** at the source..
- Both are based on the **Precautionary Principle** -- seek alternatives when there is a reasonable likelihood of harm and put the burden of proof on those who make and market problem chemicals and products.
- Both the Green Chemistry and EPR "movements" are evolving towards greater emphasis on "**framework**" **approaches** -- seeking comprehensive policy approaches rather than proceeding chemical by chemical or product by product.

California's Green Chemistry Law

In 2008 California adopted AB 1879, a comprehensive law that includes EPR. The law establishes "a process for evaluating chemicals of concern in consumer products, and their potential alternatives, to determine how best to limit exposure or to reduce the level of hazard posed by a chemical of concern." The law empowers the Department of Toxic Substances Control to take the following steps:

- Imposing requirements to **provide additional information** needed to assess a chemical of concern and its potential alternatives.
- Imposing requirements on the **labeling** or other type of consumer product information.
- Imposing a **restriction on the use** of the chemical of concern in the consumer product.
- **Prohibiting the use** of the chemical of concern in the consumer product.
- Imposing requirements that **control access** to or limit exposure to the chemical of concern in the consumer product.
- **Imposing requirements for the manufacturer to manage the product at the end of its useful life, including recycling or responsible disposal of the consumer product.**
- Imposing a requirement to fund green chemistry challenge grants where no feasible **safer alternative** exists.

While the law puts too much "burden of proof" on government (in contradiction of the Precautionary Principle), it does provide a useful action guide and a model for integrating Green Chemistry and EPR framework approaches to harmful products.

Resources

- [Chemical Policy Initiative](#) [1]- Lowell Center for Sustainable Design
- [Green Chemistry: Cornerstone to a Sustainable California 2008 Report](#) [2] (mentions producer responsibility 11 times in 22 pages)
- [Green Chemistry page](#) [3] on California Product Stewardship Council website

Links:

[1] <http://www.chemicalspolicy.org/>

[2] <http://coeh.berkeley.edu/greenchemistry/>

[3] http://www.calpsc.org/policies/green_chemistry.html