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E-WASTE – AN INCREASING CHALLENGE

Electrical and electronic waste (also referred to as “WEEE” or simply “e-Waste”) is now the fastest growing waste stream in the world as well as in South Africa.

The range of products ending up as e-waste is vast. Anything in the home or the workplace that is powered by electricity or a battery becomes “e-waste” eventually. It includes obsolete, end-of-life and/or broken items and their components including: washing machines, dishwashers, electric stoves and solar panels, vacuum cleaners, electric shavers and video cameras, mobile phones, calculators, personal computers, printers, copy machines, electric toys, power tools as well as lamps.

In 2012 each South African produced 6.63 kg of e-waste of which less than 1 kg was collected (STEP, 2012)

While certain components are lucrative to recover for recycling such as “Printed Circuit Boards” (due to their precious metal content) and metal scrap, some e-waste components contain potentially harmful or low/no-value constituents such as heavy metals and flame retardant treated plastics rendering them basically “valueless” and making them a costly liability. Due the lack of existing technologies to treat some e-waste commodities regionally, legally compliant recyclers have to currently export them to overseas countries with considerable costs and administrative effort involved.

With e-waste volumes rapidly rising, South Africa has simultaneously seen a large increase in the number of informal/SMME operations emerging. These typically start out as home /garage based entrepreneurs with little knowledge or concern about the health and safety implications of their e-waste handling activities or legal standing.

Such entry-level businesses can be both seen (and subsequently treated) as a direct threat to the handful of large formal, legally compliant recyclers in South Africa, or embraced as an opportunity when supported with mentor-ship based skills¹.

The latter approach means training up such informal micro businesses and by doing so building them into a growing network of potential sub-contractors. They can then become part of the formalisation and regional expansion of the entire e-waste management sector in Southern Africa.

AIMS OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN E-WASTE ALLIANCE (SAEWA)

Established in 2007, the Southern African e-Waste Alliance is a Non Profit Organisation(NPO No.128-494) that assists with the development of a blueprint for the responsible and legally compliant collection and treatment of all types of e-waste in Southern Africa. The SAEWA thereby represents its Members and Affiliates by acting as a non-political, impartial and independent voice for both the established and currently emerging e-waste service provider industry.

¹ Informal e-waste treatment activities are typically self-taught and very rudimentary, aimed at “cherry-picking” the few valuable materials. Often lack of proper dismantling tools and technical know-how leads to smashing and burning of e-waste, thereby exposing individuals and the wider working environment to problematic (toxic) fractions and elements. Due to their lack of adherence to any standards or regulations in place, informal businesses can significantly undercut their costs to customers when compared to a fully legally compliant operator who offers responsible treatment and disposal of all e-waste fractions-but needs to charge for this accordingly.

As such the SAEWA is committed to:

- build an e-waste industry-sector specific ***unified voice*** to communicate Member/Affiliate opinions, viewpoints and needs to the public (Government) and private sector
- market the collective activities of its Members and Affiliates as well as the SAEWA brand
- educate through the media the public at large about all aspects of responsible e-waste
- provide training and learning materials and legal updates for Affiliates/Members
- connect different e-waste management service providers to work together as an “Alliance” and follow the Integrated Waste Management Hierarchy as in NEM:WA (No. 59 of 2008)
- create a level playing field for e-waste service providers of all sizes
- support Members to fulfill recovery and treatment obligations from future IndWMP driven take-back systems.

HOW TO JOIN THE SAEWA

To ensure there is a place in the SAEWA for all key stakeholders concerned with the development of a responsible Southern African e-waste management industry, a unique tier-based membership and affiliation model was developed and is set out below.

The SAEWA TIER Model:

	Incubation	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 1
Type	Affiliate	Member	Member	Member
Required Qualification Criteria:	NONE	NONE	NONE	Formal and fully legally compliant businesses <u>ONLY</u> Sign the SAEWA Code of Conduct,; need to keep a legal register and sign an affidavit to this effect
Aimed at:	Informal/not yet fully legally operating business interested in improving standards and operations .	Tertiary institutions, consultants and businesses that have a general interest in a particular aspect of e-waste but are not directly involved refurbishment/ dismantling/ recycling thereof	Open to OEM manufacturers suppliers and/or retailers committed to support the SAEWA in an advisory capacity	Any formal business involved with any aspect of compliant e-waste management including: refurbishers, dismantlers, recyclers, transporters, disposal companies.
Applicable Fees:	R 600 per year	FREE	R 500 per month	R 500 per month

TO DOWNLOAD SAEWA AFFILIATION/MEMBER APPLICATION FORMS AND FREE TRAINING MATERIALS PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT: sa.ewastealliance.co.za