

AERC Recycling Solutions

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Batteries are one of the many recyclable products that AERC handles.

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Long before “green” became a household word, Robert Landmesser realized the need for proper hazardous waste management as it relates to mercury and harmful heavy metals. In 1990, he founded [AERC Recycling Solutions](#), now an industry leader in the field of electronic waste and mercury recycling. He is currently the Chairman of the Board where he plays an instrumental role in developing new clients.

He started AERC as an addition to his previous waste management business, Advanced Environmental Technology Corp. During the course of that business, he fielded requests from clients that wanted to know how to properly dispose of products containing mercury.

“Mercury is a highly toxic material,” explains Landmesser’s daughter, Lindsay Landmesser, AERC’s vice president of sales. “It can create a health risk, especially if it is ingested. It’s very important to make sure that mercury is managed in a safe way.”

Robert Landmesser applied for and received a Ben Franklin Institute grant to look for ways to reclaim Mercury and avoid having it dumped into landfills.

Today, EPA guidelines recommend that all mercury contained devices be recycled. “We help companies abide by the regulations, making sure that they are recycling mercury contained devices and/or contaminated soil” Lindsay Landmesser says. “We go above and beyond for the environment.”

Since its founding 20 years ago, AERC has grown into a national company with 200 full time and part time employees. The company has facilities in California, Texas, Florida, Virginia and Pennsylvania with the company’s headquarters in Allentown. AERC also has an office in New Jersey. Its management team includes industry veterans Mark Kasper, vice president of operations, Don Lees, president of the western region and CEO, Peter Jegou. This group has helped propel the company to meet sales and growth objectives while staying focused on the clients.

In 1994, AERC added batteries, ballasts and electronics to its recycling offerings. During the mid-to-late 1990s, the company saw an increase in electronics handling as well as an increase in the number of electronics with mercury switches. To meet the demand, the company expanded its electronic recycling capabilities.

“We started with one electronics recycling facility five years ago and now we have ten,” Landmesser says. “Electronic recycling is our number one growth area.”

The company expanded to Virginia in 2003 and then to Texas in 2008. “Those areas fit our market profile,” says Landmesser.

AERC is one of the few companies in its industry to operate retort machines, used for the recovery of mercury from various mercury containing materials. During the eight-hour heating process where temperatures can soar up to 1,100 degrees, the mercury in devices evaporates into mercury filters. “We drain it out and have a pure type of mercury,” Landmesser explains. “We work with another company to get it to 99.9% pure. We sell that to companies that use the new mercury in their products.”

Each of AERC’s facilities in Pennsylvania, Florida and California also use state-of-the-art technology found in the LSS1 Lamp Recycling Equipment for fluorescent lamps. The dry-processing system crushes and separates all geometric shapes of fluorescent lamps into glass, aluminum and mercury containing phosphor powder components. It can process over 3,000 lamps per hour.

AERC’s clients include municipalities, towns, counties, electrical contractors, property management companies and businesses of all sizes. AERC services clients across the US for all Universal Waste and Electronic recycling needs. The company maintains a Zero-Waste-to-Landfill Policy for all of its hazardous electronics/electrical recycling services. All electronics are dismantled domestically by AERC’s highly trained staff. No part of the electronic product goes into the landfill. “Our first intention is always to reuse the item for its intended purpose,” Landmesser says. “If something cannot be reused, it is taken apart, shredded and reclaimed,”

Landmesser finds that clients are not only aware of the need to recycle but also the differences between recyclers. “Most states require permitted recyclers,” she explains. “You have to have proper insurance requirements. We are committed to responsible recycling practices for a healthier tomorrow”

One of the strongest growth factors for AERC is its customer service policy where team members work one-on-one with companies to develop a solution tailored to their needs. “We have some clients that we have worked with since day one,” Landmesser says. “We focus on our clients. We have a national footprint so we can provide a one-vendor solution.”

Although the main focus is on larger clients AERC has a specially designed program, RecycleKits, to help small generators such as small businesses and homeowners manage their material properly as well. Each year, AERC recycles an average of more than 30 tons of mercury. The company often holds public collection events where they collect primarily electronics. “People also bring lamps and batteries,” Landmesser says.

In January, AERC collected more than 47,000 pounds of electronic waste at a one-day event in Vero Beach, Fla. All electronics collected were forwarded for processing to AERC’s Electronics Processing Com-Cycle facility in Florida. Any data contained on data storage devices was physically destroyed or wiped out according to Department of Defense Standards.

“We had one event in Berks County, Penn. where we collected over nine truckloads of material in a two-day period,” Landmesser says. “Typically there is 25,000 pounds on one truckload. There is a great need for this type of recycling.”

All recycling technicians, especially those that work with hazardous wastes, must complete a 40-hour Hazwoper training program. “All of our employees also undergo weekly safety training and short meetings before their shift starts,” Landmesser says. “Before they are hired they go through a pre-employment drug screening and a background check. They are all subject to random drug testing.”

AERC expanded once again in 2008 when it acquired the Secure Data Destruction and Disposal operations of DynTek, Inc. The acquisition included a contract with the Commonwealth of Virginia. “We go into Virginia agencies and provide an inventory of material,” Landmesser says. “We know everything that has to be recycled.” AERC hopes to capitalize on this business through the expansion of opportunities within the Virginia SDDS contract and the use of its Secure Asset Management Software Program in other areas as well.

One of the company’s newest technologies is an end-to-end process for phosphor powder that has been reclaimed called rare earth. “We are working with lighting manufacturers to send rare earth to them to use in new lamps,” Landmesser says. Glass that is recovered by AERC can be used in asphalt. Aluminum is sold back into the market. “It does not go into aluminum cans,” Landmesser says.

Landmesser wanted to join her father in his business because she was interested not only in business management but also in saving the environment. “If people didn’t come to our company with a respect for the environment and what we are doing, they develop one when they are working here,” she says. “You can make a difference by working for a green company that has a positive impact on the community. A healthy environment is so important to our economy and our nation.”