NEENAH, Wis. – R3NEW, a fast-growing, regional electronics recycler in Neenah, was formally accepted into Wisconsin’s innovative Green Tier program today by DNR officials and Fox Valley business leaders.

Speakers at today’s event, held at the R3NEW facility in Neenah, lauded the upstart company not only for its commitment to “green” business operations, but also for helping to stop the flow of valuable electronic components out of state, for engineering new life in local markets for these materials and for creating jobs in the Fox Valley.

Cathy Stepp, secretary of the Department of Natural Resources, sent congratulations, pointing out that R3NEW – by making electronics recycling safe and painless for large companies, school districts and medical complexes – is helping these employers comply with Wisconsin’s 2009 electronics recycling law and improve their overall environmental performance.

“I am thrilled that as business entrepreneurs with a bold idea for a new company you decided early on to form a partnership with the DNR,” Stepp said. “Your leadership is adding to the growing body of proof that we can create new jobs and business opportunities while making a strong and lasting commitment to protecting our environment.”

An important aspect of R3NEW’s business model is the high level of data security it provides for its customers. It uses its own trucks and drivers to collect used computers, copiers and other electronic devices, and these materials are received into what company officials call “the cage,” a secure area where all data destruction occurs. This is where “client assets” begin their journey through the facility. Nothing leaves the cage containing sensitive data.
Jean Romback-Bartels, DNR secretary’s director for northeast Wisconsin, said improper disposal of electronics has led to serious environmental problems. R3NEW is helping to counter that by keeping toxic metals like lead and mercury out of landfills.

“Green Tier is about leadership and you’ve got great leadership right here in this community,” Bartels said. “R3NEW is an incredibly creative company.”

State Sen. Rob Cowles congratulated R3NEW CEO Brian Arpke and his staff for making a commitment to Green Tier and for keeping toxic materials out of landfills, an issue of long concern, he said.

Josh Dukelow of the Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce said that from its inception R3NEW has attracted some of the largest companies and community institutions in the Fox Valley. These are big names in the community, he said, and they rely on R3NEW both to handle their sensitive data securely and to do it in an environmentally responsible manner.

“That’s a huge responsibility,” Dukelow said.

R3NEW is participating in Tier 1 of the program which is designed to encourage new goal setting and innovation. Green Tier encourages businesses and other organizations to voluntarily collaborate with DNR to move beyond compliance with regulations. In exchange for a commitment to superior environmental performance, the DNR grants benefits to Tier 1 participants including a single point of contact with the department for easier communications and collaboration.

To gain entry into Green Tier, R3NEW earned international certification for its environmental management system (ISO:14001). It also has R2 certification (responsible recycling) from the ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board. While R3NEW has tripled in size during the past two years it has reduced its already small waste output with a stated goal of becoming a “a zero landfill company.”

R3NEW also installed energy efficient lighting in its facility with sensors that turn off the lights in various areas when employees are not present, a move which is expected to reduce lighting electrical demand, and costs, by 75 percent.

Ernie Valeski, the operations manager at R3NEW and manager of environmental health and safety, welcomed the nearly 40 people who attended today’s ceremony and said there was never any doubt that R3NEW would work with the DNR on environmental issues.

“It’s in our DNA,” Valeski said. “It’s what we do. We exceed environmental standards. It’s something we live every day.”
R3NEW (pronounced “renew”) CEO Brian Arpke speaks to gathering after received Green Tier plaque.

R3NEW employee Salvador Rios Jr. disassembles a copier machine after all its data was erased. All useful materials will be recycled.