



# Electronic Product Recycling

from Ecology's Solid Waste & Financial Assistance Program

## Washington's landmark law is first in the nation

Each year in Washington State, people throw away more old computers, monitors, laptops, and televisions. Hundreds of thousands of these unwanted products end up in our local landfills. Because they are toxic, used electronic products are a serious problem in our waste stream. Businesses, residents, and local governments face a growing challenge as they search for ways to reuse, recycle, or safely dispose of this equipment.

On July 1, 2006 Washington's electronic product recycling law went into effect, changing the way the state's residents will dispose of these products in the future. The new law requires computer and television manufacturers to offer convenient recycling of electronic products by January 1, 2009 at no charge to the consumer.

Covered electronic products are computers, televisions, computer monitors, portable, or laptop computers used by households, small governments, small businesses, school districts and charities. All manufacturers of covered products must register with Ecology and participate in the program and those who do not register and provide recycling services of their products cannot sell their products in Washington state.

## Electronic products pose toxic threat to environment and human health

Electronic products contain heavy metals and other chemicals at hazardous levels that make them difficult to dispose of safely. Every cathode ray picture tube contains an estimated four to eight pounds of lead.

These toxic chemicals are known to have neurological and developmental effects when infants and children are exposed to them in high enough levels. Children tend to have greater exposure because, pound for pound, they breathe more air, drink more water and eat more food than adults.

Washington averaged one television set per household in 1970. By 2010, it is estimated Washington will have one set per person. In 1970, personal computers were unheard of. Ecology estimates approximately one computer per person statewide by 2010.

By recycling televisions and computers, Washington's citizens contribute to a safer, cleaner environment. For information on recyclers that accept electronics, call toll free 1-800-RECYCLE (800-732-9253) or go online to <http://1800recycle.wa.gov>. Most services currently available do have a cost.

## **Ambitious program on track for successful implementation**

During 2007, Washington state's landmark electronic product recycling law has been making steady progress toward implementation. More than 200 product manufacturers have now registered and the Department of Ecology has collected nearly 100 percent of the required administrative fees. Enforcement actions against two manufacturers for not registering or paying fees resulted in both becoming registered. We continue to work on bringing additional manufacturers into compliance with the law.

This legislation was ambitious and unique. It put the responsibility for running the electronic waste recycling program on the manufacturers of the products. The Materials Management and Finance Authority Board, made up of representatives of manufacturers, was appointed in February.

At their June 21 meeting, the board adopted by-laws and signed an agreement for a \$500,000 loan from Ecology to help with startup costs. The loan is due to be paid back by June 30, 2009. The authority must submit a plan for the collection, transportation and recycling program to Ecology by February 1, 2008.

The second phase of administrative rules (to specify the collection, transport, and processing standards) will be filed with the Code Reviser in July and the public comment period ends on August 30. Ecology expects the rules to be adopted by the end of September.

Recently, several states—including Oregon—have adopted legislation to begin managing their electronic waste very similar to Washington's.

## **More information:**

Contact Jay Shepard at [wa-recycles-electronics@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:wa-recycles-electronics@ecy.wa.gov) or 360/407-7040.

- The Washington Electronics Products Recycling Act:  
<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70.95N&full=true>
- Department of Ecology's Electronic Product Recycling web site:  
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/eproductrecycle>
- Sign up for the WA-Recycles-Electronics e-mail list to receive updates:  
<http://listserv.wa.gov/archives/wa-recycles-electronics.html>

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