Promoting the Safe Management of Used Electronics

Principles Shared by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Dell Inc.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Dell Inc. will work to continuously improve and promote the safe management of used electronics throughout the recycling process, with an emphasis on the use of accredited, third-party electronic recycling certification standards becoming a meaningful floor for recycler performance.

Background

EPA strives to acknowledge private-sector standards wherever possible in lieu of creating proprietary, non-consensus standards. Accredited, third-party certification standards for electronics recyclers, established by consensus and approved by recognized certification bodies, document best management practices aimed at achieving certain goals such as improved environmental protection. Accreditation means that a certification body has been acknowledged as competent to carry out certification in specified business sectors by a national accreditation body. Accredited, third-party-certified electronics recyclers are referred to below as "certified recyclers."

Adherence by recyclers to the standards can help to protect human health and the environment, minimize worker exposure to chemicals, maximize reuse and recovery, and provide other benefits. Because of these benefits EPA has a strong interest in promoting the use of these standards and in the continuous improvement of the standards themselves. EPA also encourages consumer electronics manufacturers to continue their support of these standards and simultaneously to take additional steps to better ensure recycler performance such as contractual and other mechanisms to demonstrate ongoing producer responsibility.

The public should have confidence that used electronics are being properly disposed of by recyclers that have demonstrated increased commitment to and accountability for responsible management of the process.

Shared Principles

EPA and Dell Inc. share the following principles on stewardship of used electronics:

- Product stewardship is a means to improve resource conservation and sustainable materials management through the responsible management of end-of-life electronics.
- The recent development of recycling facility third-party certification systems is a major step forward for the broader electronics recycling industry. Full implementation of these systems should be supported and encouraged by all stakeholders so that third-party certification can provide an effective floor for recycler performance.
- All parties managing used electronics should be accountable to standards, including strict, responsible controls that protect human health and the environment.

- All parties managing used electronics should ensure that electronics containing hazardous materials collected for recycling are not exported to developing countries that lack the capacity to manage the recovery and disposal of these products in ways that safeguard human health and the environment.
- All relevant stakeholders, public and private, should promote electronics recycling programs that use only third-party certified recyclers and work to make consumers aware of these recycling opportunities.
- Electronics recycling programs should be convenient to encourage participation by the public.
- Flexibility in program design is important in order to achieve the important public policy goals above as well as others.
- Electronics manufacturers should continue active management of recyclers with requirements that go beyond third-party certification through contractual and other mechanisms as an ongoing demonstration of the producer-responsibility concept.

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July 20th, 2011
Date

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July 20, 2011
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