



Plug-In Update: 2005 Activities

Partner Accomplishments

In 2005, Plug-In To eCycling partners continued to sponsor collection events, helping to raise consumer awareness about electronics reuse and recycling and increase the number of electronic devices collected and safely reuse and recycled in the United States. The following includes notable partner accomplishments during the past year:

- By sponsoring 20 events, **Best Buy** collected over 1,060,000 pounds, representing a 30-percent increase in the amount of consumer electronics collected in previous years.
 - **Cingular** collected over 220,000 pounds of mobile phones, batteries, and accessories for reuse, resale, and recycling through its collection programs.
 - **Dell** recycled 298,000 pounds of electronic products at U.S. collection events. Dell also worked with EPA to sponsor a free electronics collection event in New Orleans on December 3, 2005 to increase collection and safe recycling of computers and other electronic equipment in areas affected by Hurricane Katrina (see below).
 - **eBay's Rethink** estimates that, in its first year, it has educated over 430,000 consumer on the importance of electronics reuse and recycling.
 - Through free collection events and reuse programs, **HP** collected almost 60 million pounds of electronic products domestically and about 140 million pounds globally. HP also collected more than 2.5m units- approximately 50 million pounds for reuse programs, such as trade-in, leasing, asset management and donations.
 - **Intel** helped collect over 1.27 million pounds of electronics by hosting and cosponsoring 16 events attended by over 11,000 citizens in 65 locations.
 - **JVC** helped sponsor 130 collection events in 2005 that recycled over 48,000 pounds of JVC-branded products
 - **Lexmark** collected and recycled 4 million pounds of electronics through its ongoing collection efforts. It also collected 4,500 pounds of material during its annual Earth Day event for its employees.
- **NEC** recycled 3.6 million pounds domestically and a total of 33 million pounds of electronics products globally. NEC Display Solutions' Trade In program, which targets corporations, took in 2.5 million pounds for reuse.
 - **Panasonic** co-sponsored 130 events, collecting more than 3.2 million pounds of electronics.
 - **Philips** and **Samsung**, along with partners **JVC**, **Panasonic**, **Sharp**, and **Sony** are providing financial resources and staff support for an industry-led third party organization to help manage electronics recycling in the Pacific Northwest.
 - **Sharp** co-sponsored more than 64 collection events, collecting more than 760,000 pounds of electronic products.
 - **Sony** collected 67,000 pounds of Sony-branded electronic products through partnership events.
 - **Staples** is now offering fee-based takeback in its stores in the Pacific NW on an ongoing basis, due to its experience with hosting a Plug-In pilot project in 2004 that tested retailer-based electronics collection. In 3 months, Staples has collected 4,417 computer monitors; 2,933 laptops and CPUs; and 3821 peripherals, including cell phones.

Staples Joins the "Take It Back Network"

Staples makes it easy for consumers to recycle used computers, monitors, and other computer peripherals by allowing in-store collection through its partnership in the Pacific Northwest's Take it Back Network. Currently, Staples is the only national retailer to offer this type of ongoing collection.

Consumers in King and Snohomish Counties in Washington State have the opportunity to bring unwanted equipment to 14 Staples stores in the area. The company is charging a small recycling fee to cover product handling and recycling costs.

"With ongoing advancements in technology, appropriate disposal of obsolete and used electronics will be a growing issue. E-cycling is the right thing to do to help protect the environment and it makes good business sense," Mark Buckley, Staples Vice President of Environmental Affairs said.

This partnership comes on the heels of Staples' success during the 2004 Plug-In To eCycling pilot program, where the company tested out retail electronic collection. Customer feedback from the pilot projects was extremely supportive and made the case that offering computer recycling services to customers pays off for retailers.

The Take It Back Network is a group of electronics retailers, repair and resale vendors, recyclers, and nonprofit groups in the Pacific Northwest that reuse or properly recycle electronic equipment. The partnership provides a way for consumers, government, and businesses to share responsibility for minimizing the environmental impact of a product throughout its life cycle.

Dell Katrina Event

In the wake of cleanup efforts from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, EPA and Dell Inc. teamed up to increase collection and safe recycling of computers and electronic equipment destroyed by the effects of the storms. This free collection event was held on December 3 and was open to residents of the greater New Orleans region who had the opportunity to drop off any brand of old or unwanted computer equipment, televisions, VCRs, DVD players, radios, and similar electronics to be recycled.

According to EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson, the Agency "is helping to make sure yesterday's high-tech gadgets are not becoming tomorrow's contaminated garbage. By working with communities to collect and properly dispose of electronic wastes, we are working to protect the health of current and future generations of Gulf Coast residents."

The public-private partnership also included the Louisiana Department of Environment Quality (LDEQ), the National Recycling Coalition (NRC), Jefferson Parish, the town of Kenner, and the Pontchartrain Center.

EPA and its partners are planning to evaluate the results of this event and determine whether electronics collection can be an effective part of the region-wide clean up efforts.

Reuse Campaign

At EPA's National Electronics Meeting in March 2005, stakeholders came together to form a new working group to eliminate barriers to reusing electronics. Projects include:

- **Promoting donation.** The working group has created two fact sheets providing tips for businesses and the general public about donating electronics for reuse. The tip sheets explain how to clear data and provide suggestions for identifying donation recipients or refurbishment channels.

- **Reducing obstacles to international reuse.** Along with the United Nations University's Solving the E-Waste Problem (StEP) initiative, the working group is seeking to reduce barriers to the export of electronics to be reused across the globe.
- **Promoting additional avenues for reuse of unwanted computers from the federal sector.** The working group is aiming to revise language in an existing executive order to allow additional organizations to refurbish unwanted federal computers for donation.

Participation in the working group is open to all interested organizations. Current members include Computer Recycling Center/Computers in Education, Computer Recycling For Education, Computers for Schools, Consumer Reports, General Electric, General Motors, Goodwill, Hargadon Computer, Intel, National Cristina Foundation, Rethink, San Francisco Dept. of Environment, Students Recycling Used Technology (StRUT) Silicon Valley, Tech Soup (Compumentor), Time Dollar Tutoring, Truecycle, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Plug-In To eCycling program.

Recycler Certification:

EPA is working with states, electronics recyclers, manufacturers and others to help create a credible and widely adopted electronics certification program. The goal of this program is to raise the bar for safe recycling of electronics. A first meeting on this topic was held this past October at the E-Scrap Conference in Orlando. Stakeholders plan to convene again in early 2006 to decide on a collaborative process that will move certification forward.

Efforts to Develop Electronics Recycling Infrastructure

EPA is working with states, local governments, manufacturers, retailers and others to help research and pilot industry-led organizations that can manage electronics recycling activities in multi-state, regional or even national contexts. One initial project is exploring development of a third-party organization in the Pacific Northwest under the guidance of 8 major electronics manufacturers. Another project is the National Electronics Recycling Infrastructure Clearinghouse, an information resource on electronics recycling systems being established by the National Center for Electronics Recycling with support from the CEA and U.S. EPA grant funding. For more information, go to <www.ecyclingresource.org>.

Data Collection

Finally, EPA is supporting efforts to populate a national database that can better inform the public on how many electronics are being recycled domestically as part of its larger effort to update current domestic baseline information. For more information, go to <www.electronicrecycling.org/cdr>.