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The Resource Conservation Challenge: What Can You *Change* Today?

The Resource Conservation Challenge (RCC) is a national effort to conserve natural resources and energy by managing materials more efficiently. By committing ourselves to reduce more waste, to reuse and recycle more products, to buy more recycled and recyclable products, and to reduce toxic chemicals in waste, we to conserve energy and preserve natural resources.

Making Change Happen

We are working with states, industry, businesses, and others to find smarter, faster ways to accomplish RCC goals. Whether we partner within the federal government, with major businesses, or with a town and its residents, we use approaches or principles that yield environmental results.

The RCC is working hard to reduce waste and increase the reuse and recycling of materials. We've targeted the nation's largest waste streams, and set priorities for:

- Recycling municipal solid waste
- Reusing and recycling industrial materials
- Reducing priority and toxic chemicals in products and waste
- Promoting green initiatives, especially the safe design and recycling of electronics

Finding Solutions for Used Electronics

RCC's Plug-In To eCycling Partnership includes 21 manufacturers and retailers of consumer electronics, as well as 26 governments, which are providing Americans with more access to electronics recycling. In its first years, Plug-In Partners recycled 45.5 million pounds of unwanted electronics. Plug-In partners rely on recyclers that meet or exceed our voluntary guidelines for safe electronics recycling. Plug-In Partners have run pilot programs with manufacturers, retailers, and local governments to create more compelling opportunities for consumers to drop off old electronics. These pilots collected over 11 million pounds of used electronics and provided valuable data on best practices.

For more information, visit <www.plugintoecycling.org>.

Recycled/Recyclable. Printed with vegetable oil based inks on 100% (minimum 50% postconsumer) recycled paper.

Reaching a 35 Percent National Recycling Rate by 2008

We're reinvigorating the public's commitment to, and value placed on, recycling. We hope to help the nation achieve our 35 percent goal by focusing on:

- Paper
- Food scraps and yard trimmings
- Packaging/container materials

In 2000, recycling resulted in an annual energy savings equal to the amount of energy used in 6 million homes in a year (more than 660 trillion BTUs). In 2005, recycling is conservatively projected to save enough energy for 9 million homes (900 trillion BTUs).

We're working with states, local governments, national recycling organizations, and recycling businesses to provide more opportunities for recycling at local levels. We're cooperating with commercial and municipal sectors that provide the greatest opportunities for success. For example, shopping centers nationwide are now committed to recycling more materials through our America's Marketplace Recycles! partnership (www.epa.gov/rcc/amr.htm).

Reusing and Recycling Industrial Materials

Historically, Americans simply disposed of millions and millions of tons of industrial byproducts. Now, through the RCC we're trying to increase reuse and recycling of these industrial materials. We have opportunities to increase the use of coal ash, construction and demolition debris, and foundry sands in highway, building, and other construction projects. When we safely use these materials, we conserve virgin resources, reduce energy use and associated greenhouse gas emissions, and extend the useful life of landfills. There are also economic advantages to the safe reuse of some industrial byproducts. We're aggressively looking for smart ways to use:

- *Coal ash*. We aim to have at least 45 percent of this byproduct in use by 2008. More than 129 million tons of coal ash are generated every year. Using this coal ash in lieu of Portland cement can reduce the amount of carbon emitted in the manufacturing process.
- *Construction and demolition debris*. We're collaborating with our stakeholders to set targets that reduce the waste from construction and demolition and increase the use of materials in construction and demolition debris.
- *Foundry sands*. We're focusing on nonhazardous "green sands," which use clay as binder material and are the molding media most commonly used by foundries.

If we achieve all the goals of our Coal Combustion Products Partnership (C^2P^2), we'll be reducing 11 million tons of carbon dioxide in greenhouse gas emissions, saving 3,540,768 barrels of crude oil.

For more information, visit <www.epa.gov/c2p2>.

Protecting Health and Ecosystems by Reducing Risk from Toxic Chemicals

We're taking careful and deliberate steps to remove the worst chemicals, such as lead, mercury, and dioxins, from our environment. These chemicals, along with 28 others, are federal priorities because they are persistent, bioaccumulative, and highly toxic. We're trying to reduce risk from these chemicals. Companies can produce less waste and thus lower their disposal costs by substituting, eliminating, or recycling certain chemicals in manufacturing processes. We challenge industry to join our efforts to improve the environment more quickly. By relying on American ingenuity, we can substantially reduce the volume and toxicity of priority chemicals in waste. We ask companies to voluntarily:

- Substitute safer alternatives when they can.
- Minimize the amount of priority chemicals they use, if they can't substitute for them.
- Maximize their recycling efforts.
- Design products to minimize exposure to, and release of, priority chemicals during manufacturing and use.

We're providing technical assistance and special recognition to help motivate companies to reduce both the risk from and amount of priority chemicals they use.

The National Partnership for Environmental Priorities (NPEP) uses voluntary partnerships to reduce the use and release of priority chemicals. Partners receive public recognition, information, and assistance.

For more information visit <www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/minimize/partnership.htm>.

Promoting and Practicing Environmental Stewardship for Electronic Products

Computers and other electronic products are one of the fastest growing (and among the least recycled) components of America's waste stream. We estimate that we discard electronic products at the rate of 2 million a year. On top of that are millions of televisions, video games, CD players, telephones, and computers that are stored somewhere because their owners cannot, or do not know how to, reuse or recycle them.

Helping Consumers Buy "Green" Computers

As we now look for the ENERGY STAR® logo, in the future we will want to look for the "EPEAT" emblem. EPEAT stands for Electronics Product Environmental Assessment Tool. It's being created to help consumers evaluate, compare, and select desktop computers, laptops, and monitors according to their environmental attributes. Computers will have either a Bronze, Silver, or Gold EPEAT emblem that indicates their environmental performance.

For more information, visit <www.epeat.net>.

Our national partners are collaborating with us to address environmental considerations along the entire life cycle of electronic products. Focusing initially on personal computers, televisions, and cell phones, we're striving to change the overall design, operation, reuse, recycling, and disposal of electronic equipment. We are committed to maintaining and building markets for recyclable electronics. One way we're supporting markets is through the Federal Electronics Challenges (FEC). The FEC is a voluntary effort by federal agencies to buy greener electronics and to manage used electronics in an environmentally responsible way. What's more, electronic products are being made with materials that pose significantly lower risk from toxic components, such as lead. Our Plug-In To eCycling partners are working diligently to provide recycling services for used electronic equipment. Working with them, we plan to increase recycling services nationwide by 50 percent over the next two years.

Changing Our Lives

Accepting responsibility for improving our environment means changing our habits, processes, and practices. Everyone has a role. Businesses, consumers, and governments work together to ensure change across the whole supply chain—from designing better, less toxic products to ensuring easier product reuse and recyclability, to constructing millions of miles of highways using millions of tons of coal ash.

Our RCC partners understand these concepts and are our means to this end. Their innovative solutions point us toward an environmentally sustainable future, where waste is a concept of the past. Moving to an efficient and safe materials flow system is our ultimate goal. We acknowledge government and industry progress and willingness to adopt a resource and energy conservation ethic. The RCC combines and strengthens many individual efforts into a unified force that:

- Conserves energy and materials
- Reduces risks from the use of toxic and priority chemicals in waste
- Prevents pollution and promotes materials reuse and recycling in all product life cycles

GreenScapes

The GreenScapes Alliance provides cost-efficient, environmentally friendly solutions for large-scale landscaping.

Following the principles of GreenScapes can help save money, save energy, reduce waste, conserve water, and reduce overall environmental impact, including climate change impact. Other benefits include reduced exposure to chemicals.

For more information, visit <www.epa.gov/greenscapes>.

For More Information

Visit us on the Internet at <www.epa.gov/rcc>, and read the *RCC Action Plan* at <www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw/conserve/action-plan/act-tic.htm>.

Goals of the Resource Conservation Challenge

- **Prevent waste in the first place.**
- **Reduce risk from and minimize the use of toxic chemicals.**
- **Use environmentally efficient manufacturing processes that include reuse and recycling.**
- **Design and use durable, reusable, and recyclable products.**
- **Find safe, widespread uses for industrial materials.**
- **Manage materials, not waste.**
- **Minimize our individual and collective impacts on our environment.**

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