

## Energy and Commerce Committee Investigates Adequacy of EPA E-Waste Regulations

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Leaders of the Committee on Energy and Commerce wrote the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today, pressing the agency to swiftly address the looming e-waste problem and, in particular, to describe how the EPA is responding to shortcomings outlined in a recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report. GAO exposed EPA's lax enforcement of existing regulations that govern the export of one type of e-waste, cathode ray tubes (CRTs). CRTs are the glass video display components of electronic devices.

"It is unconscionable that this toxic waste is shipped abroad to countries with weaker environmental

regulations," said Rep. John D. Dingell (D-MI), Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. "With the upcoming transition from analog to digital television, the volume of e-waste will only increase and the problems associated with e-waste will only be compounded. We intend to see why EPA has failed to enforce these regulations and what steps it is taking to remedy this situation."

"The fact that U.S. electronic waste is often exported to be scrapped by children under unsafe conditions in developing nations is a disgrace," said Rep. Gene Green (D-TX), the Chairman of the Environment and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee. "If EPA will not halt the toxic and often illegal e-waste trade to developing nations, then our Committee must take action."

"It is particularly disturbing that the EPA has failed to enforce the regulations for cathode ray tubes and appears to have ignored GAO's recommendations," said Rep. Bart Stupak (D-MI), the Chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee. "The Committee will conduct vigorous oversight to ensure that EPA takes the steps necessary to regulate the export of e-waste that contains hazardous substances."

The GAO report, released in August, focused on the illegal exports of CRTs. As part of its investigation, GAO also set up a sting operation and posed as foreign buyers searching for nonworking CRTs from Hong Kong, India, Pakistan, and other countries. They found 43 U.S. electronics recyclers that were willing to export broken CRTs to a GAO front company, violating the CRT rule. Additionally, GAO found that intercepted shipping containers of used CRTs were returned to the United States by Hong Kong. In each instance, the U.S. exporters neither notified EPA nor received consent from Hong Kong as required by the CRT rule.

Currently, CRTs are the only form of e-waste regulated by EPA when exported for reuse or recycling. If exporters are in violation of one or more of the conditions in the CRT regulations, they are subject to an enforcement action and civil or criminal penalties. However, EPA has been lax in its enforcement of hazardous waste export requirements.

In their letter, the lawmakers pressed EPA to explain how it will address GAO's concerns and begin enforcing regulations on CRTs. The lawmakers also asked about other categories of e-waste, including cell phones, laptops, printers, and Blackberries, calling on EPA to determine how much e-waste has been exported from the United States since January 1, 2007.

Read the letter

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