

TOXIC ELECTRONICS

WE HAVE A PROBLEM:

- Globally, between 22 and 55 million tons of electronic waste such as mobile phones, personal stereos and computers are trashed every year.¹ That's between 150-400 pounds of waste per American!
- These products are often deliberately manufactured to last just two or three years.
- Many of these products contain materials that are toxic to people and the environment, including heavy metals, flame retardants and PVC plastic.
- E-waste ends up in landfills and incinerators or is shipped, often illegally, to the developing world where it is dismantled by hand in horrendous conditions.²

“Tragically these wastes are often the only toys they have. For example, one child of a migrant worker family was playing with a cartridge. His face was covered with toner. He was only three years old.”

Kevin May, Greenpeace China campaigner,
on child workers he witnessed at an electronics dismantling yard

SOLUTION:

- There are cleaner, safer alternatives for all of these compounds.
- Computers, cell phones and other e-goods should be clean and built to last.
- Manufacturers should be made responsible for reclaiming and recycling e-waste, not the taxpayer.
- E-waste should not be exported to newly industrializing countries, where it is disposed of in hazardous conditions.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Buy only from companies which have pledged to eliminate toxic chemicals from their products and to take responsibility for properly reusing or recycling them.
- Return products to the manufacturer when you have finished using them.
- Tell Congress, your governors and state legislators to enact laws to require clean e-products and full manufacturer responsibility for e-waste.



TAKE ACTION TO STOP TOXIC E-WASTE



The Issue

From personal stereos to computers, and high resolution televisions to cell phones, we use more electronic gadgets than ever. When they break, often after just one or two years of use, we trash them rather than fix them. Yet this electronic waste contains high levels of toxins, including heavy metals such as lead and mercury, and poisonous plastics such as PVC. In 2000, some 4.6 million tons of e-waste was dumped in U.S. landfills,³ where its harmful chemicals may leach into the earth and groundwater. Even more of this waste is shipped to Asia where it is picked apart by hand, often by child laborers, and frequently dumped untreated into local streams.

The Solution

It doesn't have to be this way. There are safer, economic alternatives for many of these poisonous compounds. Manufacturers also need to take responsibility for their products from the cradle to the grave, rather than letting the taxpayer or poor countries pick up the financial and environmental tab. As a society, we must move beyond the disposable culture and demand products that are durable, repairable and made with safe, environmentally-friendly components.

The Opposition

The electronics industry is resisting change and Congress, heavily influenced by their well-funded lobby, has also been a laggard. Laws requiring safer, cleaner electronic goods are long overdue.

What You Can Do

SEND A MESSAGE: Tell Congress, your governors and state legislators to enact laws requiring clean e-products and full manufacturer responsibility for used products.

LOOK FOR: Products from companies pledged to eliminate toxic chemicals and to take responsibility for properly reusing or recycling them.

RETURN USED PRODUCTS: When you have finished using them, return products to the manufacturer.

GET INVOLVED: On campus or online at:
www.greenpeaceusa.org/getinvolved

Greenpeace Victories



- ♦ Samsung is now a leader in agreeing to phase out toxic chemicals.
- ♦ Nokia is committed to phase out PVC and plans to eliminate all brominated flame retardants by the end of 2006.
- ♦ Hewlett Packard has also pledged to eliminate PVC and all brominated flame retardants by 2007.

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