

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

April 2002
EPA530-F-02-018
www.epa.gov/osw

More Recycling and Reuse Proposed For Electronic Wastes and Mercury- Containing Equipment

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is promoting the safe reuse and recycling of cathode ray tubes and mercury-containing equipment. The Agency believes that revising existing regulations for these growing waste streams will facilitate better collection; lead to more recycling and less disposal; and will better protect the environment. It will also help keep mercury and lead out of municipal landfills and incinerators.

Background

Cathode Ray Tubes (CRTs). CRTs are the video display components of televisions and computer monitors. CRT glass typically contains enough lead to be classified as hazardous waste when it's being recycled or disposed of. Currently, businesses and other organizations that recycle or dispose of their CRTs are confused about the applicability of hazardous waste management requirements to their computer or television monitors. The Agency is proposing to revise regulations to encourage opportunities to safely collect, reuse, and recycle CRTs.

Mercury-containing Equipment. Mercury is contained in several types of instruments that are commonly used by electric utilities, municipalities, and households. Among others, these devices include barometers, meters, temperature gauges, pressure gauges, sprinkler system contacts, and parts of coal conveyor systems. EPA has received data on mercury-containing equipment since 1995, when it issued the first federal universal waste rule. The Agency believes that adding mercury-containing devices to the universal waste stream will facilitate better management of this waste.

Universal wastes are items such as batteries, thermostats, pesticides, and lamps that are commonly thrown into the trash by households and small businesses. Handlers of universal wastes follow tailored standards for storing, transporting, and collecting wastes. These standards are designed to encourage collection and keep these wastes out of municipal landfills and incinerators.

Action

Cathode Ray Tubes. To encourage more reuse and recycling, intact CRTs being sent for possible reuse are considered to be products rather than waste, and therefore not regulated unless they are being disposed of. If CRT handlers disassemble the CRTs and send the glass for recycling, EPA is also proposing to exclude them from being a waste, provided they comply with simplified storage, labeling, and transportation requirements. Furthermore, the Agency believes that if broken CRTs are properly containerized and labeled when stored or shipped before recycling, they resemble commodities more than waste.

Finally, processed glass being sent to a CRT glass manufacturer or a lead smelter is excluded from hazardous waste management under most conditions. If the glass is being sent to any other kind of recycler, it must be packaged and labeled the same as broken CRTs. The Agency believes that these proposed changes will encourage the recycling of these materials, while minimizing the possibility of releasing lead into the environment.

Mercury-containing Equipment. The universal waste rule tailors management requirements to the nature of the waste in order to encourage collection (including household collections) and proper management. Universal waste generators, collectors, and transporters must follow specific recordkeeping, storage and transportation requirements. The Agency is proposing the same tailored requirements for mercury-containing equipment. Final disposal and recycling requirements remain unchanged.

For More Information

This fact sheet and other documents related to this rule are available on the Internet at <<http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/recycle/electron/crt.htm>>. For additional information, or to order paper copies of any documents, contact the RCRA Call Center. The Call Center operates weekdays, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and may be reached by dialing: 703-412-9810, TDD 703-412-3323, 1-800-424-9346, or TDD 1-800-553-7672.