



Digital Television Transition May Increase Electronic Waste

You may have heard that as of February 17, 2009, all full-power television stations will stop broadcasting analog signals, rendering older televisions useless. Worried you'll be in the dark? Here is some information to help you make the transition.

Currently, most over-the-air stations are broadcasting in both analog and digital formats. If you have an older TV (most pre-2004 televisions), and use "rabbit ears" or a rooftop antenna to access TV channels, you will be affected by this transition and must take one of the following actions:

1. Buy a converter box that plugs into your analog TV;
2. Connect your analog TV to cable, satellite or other pay service; or
3. Buy a TV with a digital tuner.

The good news is that most U.S. households receive television through cable or satellite services and thus will not be affected by the switch. Also, newer TVs with LCD screens are more energy efficient than their older counterparts. The bad news? Americans are disposing of old TVs in record numbers, and the majority end up in landfills. The EPA predicts that 25 million end-of-life TVs will be disposed of in 2010, and the average recycling rate for these units is only 12%. All electronics contain hazardous materials, but older cathode-ray-tube (CRT) televisions are among the worst offenders, with nearly 8% of their weight consisting of lead.

If you are looking to dispose of your old television (analog, CRT, or otherwise), ensure that it is properly recycled. Many retailers like Sony, as well as local municipalities, are beginning to offer TV take-back programs. Electronic-waste recycling events are held regularly in NYC and elsewhere. See the resources below for more information.

As always, if you need to discard electronic waste at your office, contact your Great Forest representative.

More Info:

www.dtv2009.gov and www.dtv.gov – Government info about digital television
www.epa.gov/eCycling/tv-convert.htm – EPA info on recycling old TVs
www.popularmechanics.com/technology/how_to/4277703.html – Aug. 13, 2008 article about recycling televisions
www.cenyc.org/recycling/recyclingevents – Recycling events in NYC, including e-waste recycling.



Image: Seattle Times

Did You Know...?

Americans bought over 2.5 million televisions in preparation for the last Super Bowl. The majority of old TV sets were landfilled.

Source: Take Back My TV Campaign
www.takebackmytv.com

Bangladesh's Growing Recycling Industry

Reuters recently reported on the growing plastic recycling industry in Bangladesh, which provides a safe source of income for many in the country. In the news video online, Bangladeshis are seen separating clear from colored plastic, and turning plastic bottles into PET flakes (polyethylene terephthalate), which are later spun into plastic fibers for clothing and pillows.

Bangladesh's 3,000 factories process over 20,000 tons of PET flakes annually, and the \$10 million industry is growing by 20 percent each year.

More Info:

www.environmentalleader.com/2008/08/11/bangladesh-turns-plastic-bottles-into-export-industry/ - Watch the Reuter's video online

NYC Disclosing Carbon Footprint

More than twenty cities, including New York City, recently joined the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), agreeing to measure their carbon footprints and attempt to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

“The process should really lead to the beginnings of a fundamental restructuring of how cities consume energy,” said Paul Dickinson, chief executive of the UK-based CDP. The thirty cities, including NYC, West Palm Beach, Las Vegas, and New Orleans, will publish their reports on climate-related emissions early next year.

“Working together, and with the best data, we can manage this problem,” New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg said in a press release about NYC’s commitment to assess GHG emissions. The agreement comes as a part of NYC’s PlaNYC, which aims to achieve a 30% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 in the city.

More Info:

www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSN0831199520080811
– NYC among 21 cities to disclose carbon footprint
<http://greenbiz.com/news/2008/08/11/us-cities-agree-disclose-ghg-emissions> – U.S. Cities agree to disclose GHG emissions

New Product Made From Recycled Drywall

Innovation in eco-friendly construction products has led to a new product made entirely of recycled drywall (gypsum wallboard), that can be used for garden and agricultural purposes.

USA Gypsum, a gypsum recycling company based in Pennsylvania, finds that many businesses want to recycle their gypsum to gain LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) points for construction projects. Their new product takes what would otherwise be a waste product and makes it into ‘granular gypsum,’ which can be used to loosen soil and hard clay.

During the recycling process, paper is separated from the gypsum core and turned into animal bedding, and the gypsum is formed into pellets. “We are recycling 100 percent of the material we get in,” said Terry Weaver, president of USA Gypsum.

More Info:

www.greenerbuildings.com/news/2008/08/05/waste-drywall-finds-new-life-as-gypsum-products – Waste Drywall Finds New Life as Gypsum Products

Paper, Paper, Everywhere

According to the World Resources Institute, every American consumes about 675 pounds of paper, or an average of 5.4 trees, annually. From copy paper to toilet paper to books and magazines, paper plays a major role in our daily lives.

Here are a few ideas on cutting your ‘paper footprint’ from non-toxic cleaning company Seventh Generation’s website.

- Save and read documents on your computer. Only print those documents you absolutely need in a hard copy
- Before you print, condense your text so you use as few pages as possible
- Reuse pages that are misprinted
- Print double-sided
- Read books and newspapers from the library, or find used ones, rather than purchasing new
- Buy paper with at least 30% recycled content
- Recycle paper at home and at the office. Follow established recycling procedures in your building

Nonprofit INFORM’s Secret Life web series is now reporting on the secret life of paper (you may recall we reported on INFORM’s Secret Life of Cell Phones back in April). Check out their website to learn more about the environmental issues associated with this ubiquitous material.

More Info:

www.seventhgeneration.com/learn/news/great-paper-chase-how-use-less-and-save-more – Seventh Generation’s Great Paper Chase website tips
www.seventhgeneration.com/learn/lists/take-control-your-junk-mail – Tips on how to reduce junk mail
<http://secret-life.org/index.php> – INFORM’s Secret Life of Paper video and more

