Obama Administration Officials and Industry Leaders Unveil Federal Strategy to Promote U.S.-Based Electronics Recycling Market and Jobs

Dell Inc., Sprint and Sony Electronics sign agreement with EPA to encourage certified recycling, protect public health, and support best practices in electronics stewardship

WASHINGTON, DC – At an event today, in Austin, Texas, at a certified electronics recycling center, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, General Services Administrator Martha N. Johnson, and White House Council on Environmental Quality Chair Nancy Sutley were joined by the CEOs of Dell Inc. and Sprint, and senior executives from Sony Electronics to release the Obama Administration’s “National Strategy for Electronics Stewardship” – a strategy for the responsible electronic design, purchasing, management and recycling that will promote the burgeoning electronics recycling market and jobs of the future here at home. The announcement today includes the first voluntary commitments made by Dell, Sprint and Sony to EPA’s industry partnership aimed at promoting environmentally sound management of used electronics. The Administration’s strategy also commits the federal government to take specific actions that will encourage the more environmentally friendly design of electronic products, promote recycling of used or discarded electronics, and advance a domestic market for electronics recycling that will protect public health and create jobs.

Every year, Americans generate almost 2.5 million tons of used electronics, which are made from valuable resources such as precious metals and rare earth materials, as well as plastic and glass. From computers and cell phones, to portable communication and music devices – United States is, and will continue to be, a global leader in designing and developing new and improved electronic technologies. The responsible management of electronics provides an opportunity to create economic development and jobs by developing a strong domestic electronics recycling market while preventing pollution at home and abroad.

As outlined in the strategy report, the federal government will:

- promote the development of more efficient and sustainable electronic products;
- direct federal agencies to buy, use, reuse and recycle their electronics responsibly;
- support recycling options and systems for American consumers; and
- strengthen America’s role in the international electronics stewardship arena.

Under today’s strategy, GSA will remove products that do not comply with comprehensive and robust energy efficiency or environmental performance standards – from its information technology purchase contracts used by federal agencies, and will ensure that all electronics used by the Federal government are reused or recycled properly. In addition, EPA and GSA will promote development of new environmental performance standards for categories of electronic products not covered by current standards. Several federal agencies will work together to identify methods for tracking used electronics in Federal agencies to move toward reuse and recycling.

A key component of this strategy includes the use of certified recyclers and increasing safe and effective management and handling of used electronics in the United States and working with industry in a collaborative manner to achieve that goal. As a first step in this effort, EPA Administrator Jackson in
Austin, TX today signed a voluntary commitment with Dell Inc. CEO Michael Dell and Sprint CEO Dan Hesse to promote a U.S. based electronics recycling market. Sony Electronics Inc. representatives were also present and also committed to improving the safe management of used electronics. This collaboration with industry aims to encourage businesses and consumers to recycle their electronics with certified recyclers, and for electronic recyclers to become certified. There are two existing domestic third-party certification recycling entities, R2 and E-Stewards. The electronics recycling industry is increasingly embracing these certification programs. Certified recyclers are regularly audited by these certification entities to ensure that electronics are recycled in a manner that is safe for human health and the environment. As the next steps in this collaborative effort, EPA will continue to work with industry to encourage other companies to voluntarily commit to help grow the domestic recycling market, create the green jobs of the future in the United States and educate consumers.

“Through a strong federal partnership, and coordination with manufacturers, retailers, recyclers, State and local governments, and other stakeholders, the actions outlined here will help address the potential health and environmental problems caused by the mismanagement of discarded electronics,” said Nancy Sutley, Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality. “This strategy will encourage the recycling of these valuable resources and allow the U.S. to take advantage of the economic opportunities of remanufacturing and create jobs of the future here in America.”

“A robust electronics recycling industry in America would create new opportunities to efficiently and profitably address a growing pollution threat,” said EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. “The participation of industry leaders like Dell, Sprint and Sony is absolutely essential to this effort, and will help ensure that the work of the federal government -- the largest electronics consumer around -- is protecting our people from pollution at the same time we support savings and job creation through e-cycling and re-use of valuable materials.”

“The Nation’s largest single consumer of electronics, the Federal Government, will now be the Nation’s most responsible user of electronics. The steps outlined in the report will ensure that government leads by example and that the billions of dollars in IT equipment the government cycles through annually will be either reused or recycled properly,” said GSA Administrator Martha Johnson.

"Our goal at Dell is to deliver the highest quality and most efficient products to our customers with the least environmental impact," said Michael Dell, chairman and CEO, Dell Inc. "Last fiscal year, we diverted more than 150 million pounds of end-of-life electronics globally from landfills, and we are well on our way to meeting our goal of recycling 1 billion pounds by 2014. We encourage everyone in our industry to commit to easier, more responsible recycling as we all work to protect our planet."

“To be recognized by the EPA for responsible e-waste recycling is an honor for Sprint and a chance to build on our industry-first Electronics Stewardship Policy,” said Sprint CEO Dan Hesse. “Our current policy and today’s commitment with the EPA highlights our goal to handle electronic waste holistically – from product design to disposal – and is another proof point to our broader commitment to sustainability innovation.”

“At Sony, any product we make and put our name on, we will take back and recycle in the most responsible manner,” said Mark Small, Vice President for Corporate Environment, Safety and Health. “‘We Make It, We Take It Back’ has been Sony’s policy since 1995. This partnership – in coordination with the EPA and other stakeholders – will help us reach our “Road to Zero” goal, Sony’s vision of zero waste and zero environmental impact throughout the complete life cycle of all our products and related activities.”

For more information on GSA’s electronic stewardship goals and promoting federal agencies’ purchasing Environmentally Preferable Products: www.gsa.gov/portal/content/187053

For more information on the EPA and industry collaboration: