

## Tuning into the problem of old TV waste



Environmentalists worry about a potential waste problem when people throw away their old TVs once they switch to digital. Some feel the manufacturers should take the lead on the issue. Shia Levitt reports.

### TEXT OF STORY

TV remote (iStockPhoto)

#### SCOTT JAGOW:

Today, Hawaii becomes the first state to switch to digital TV. In about a month, it'll be digital-only everywhere in the U.S. But there are some concerns about this. Barack Obama has called for a postponement. He says a lot of people just aren't ready. And environmentalists are worried what's gonna happen to those old TV sets. From the Marketplace Sustainability Desk, Shia Levitt reports.

#### SHIA LEVITT:

Jensen Kroll stands between pallets of shrink-wrapped TV sets stacked about six feet high. He oversees regional e-waste recycling for the company Waste Management. That includes this plant in Somerset, New Jersey.

#### JENSEN KROLL:

These TVs are all here to be deprocessed, or demanufactured down into their final components.

Cathode ray tube TV sets are sawed in half to remove the leaded glass. Metals go into their own bin and plastic casings into a trash compactor.

[Sound of a trash compactor compacting]

Kroll's noticed more old TV sets since the digital switchover was announced. But lots of TVs don't make it here. Instead, they end up in landfills, where environmentalists worry their toxic components can cause harm.

Before the stream of obsolete TVs turns into a flood, some environmental groups are pushing manufacturers to foot the bill for recycling their products.

#### BARBARA KYLE:

They should just build it into the cost of when we buy a product. If I'm buying a TV, part of what I should be paying for is the cost of recycling that television.

Barbara Kyle coordinates the Electronics Takeback Coalition:

**KYLE:**

When the manufacturers are in the loop like that, they actually have an incentive to modify their products and make them more recyclable.

Some major players are already on board. Among them Samsung, LG, and SONY. They're starting to pay firms to recycle their old products.

Doug Smith is SONY's Environmental Affairs Director. He says electronic waste contains more valuable materials than any ore mined from the ground.

**DOUG SMITH:**

With enough volume coming in, we can actually be more profitable at generating new raw materials than a mine should be.

Some states prohibit the disposal of e-waste into landfills. Others have legislation mandating that manufacturers take responsibility for electronic waste collection and recycling.

Hawaii passed its own bill last year that puts the responsibility on manufacturers, but it will take a few years to phase in the requirements.

In Brooklyn, I'm Shia Levitt for Marketplace.

