



# Plug-In Update: 2006 Activities

[www.epa.gov/plugin](http://www.epa.gov/plugin)

## Partner Accomplishments

Plug-In to eCycling is a voluntary partnership between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and electronics manufacturers and retailers aimed at offering consumers more opportunities to donate or recycle their used electronics. Partners design and implement various approaches—either national or regional in scope—to give individuals eCycling options. Partners might offer online takeback or trade-in programs, create partnerships with local organizations to facilitate collections, host collection events at retail locations, and support local recycling events with cities and municipalities.

In 2006, Plug-In To eCycling partners collected more than 34 million pounds of electronics through their combined voluntary efforts. The energy conserved and greenhouse gas emissions prevented through these recycling efforts is equal to saving enough electricity to power more than 7,000 homes and taking approximately 12,000 cars off the road for a year. Since the program launched in 2003, partners collaborated to recycle over 95 million pounds.

Notable partner accomplishments for 2006 include:

**Best Buy** collected approximately 13 million pounds of CRTs, LCD and plasma TVs, and monitors from customer homes or through its services programs. Best Buy sponsored 40 collection events in local communities, recycling over 1.5 million additional pounds from 13,000 participants, thus doubling the number of events it supported in 2005. In March, Best Buy also assisted in Hurricane Katrina cleanup efforts by collecting and recycling over 220,000 pounds of damaged electronics. Since 2001, Best Buy has collected and recycled over 4,500,000 pounds from such events—held mainly in store parking

lots—and an additional 90,000 pounds of cell phones, inkjet cartridges, and rechargeable batteries from recycling fixtures located in the entryways of each Best Buy store.

**Cingular Wireless** collected almost 4.5 million phones—recycling more than 470,000 pounds of phones, accessories, and batteries through its recycler, Hobi International.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the company refurbished more than 4 million phones for resale through an authorized agent. In June 2006, Cingular launched its Reuse & Recycle Policy, requiring all 2,000 company-owned retail stores to participate in its mobile phone, PDA, battery, and accessory recycling program. Cingular's customer service Web portal now includes a store locator for consumers to search by city and ZIP Code for the closest Cingular store at which to recycle their used phones.

**Dell** recycled over 4.2 million pounds of electronics through innovative partnerships and collection events. Dell's program with Goodwill Industries—the Reconnect Alliance—collected more than 4 million pounds of equipment for reuse or recycling in five states. Through its partnership with the National Cristina Foundation, Dell offers consumers opportunities to donate computers. In September 2006, Dell introduced free online recycling, providing consumers with opportunities to recycle used Dell computers by downloading a shipping label from the company's Web site. In addition to these initiatives, Dell also hosted local events in Tennessee, Ohio, and Oklahoma, collecting more than 200,000 pounds of used electronics. By 2009, Dell aims to recover 275 million pounds of equipment from customers.

**eBay's Rethink initiative** educates consumers on why eCycling is important and provides them with information and options for donating or recycling electronics. In 2006, Rethink

<sup>1</sup> Cingular, with its recycling partner HOB International, Inc., promotes complete demanufacturing of cellular phones as a recycling service—instead of smelting the phone—to increase the resource recovery potential from the recycling process. Whereas most smelting processes recover less than 0.5 percent of valuable resources, de-manufacturing often generates recovery rates in excess of 80 percent





generated 785,000 Web hits, educating more than 229,000 unique visitors on eCycling. Rethink members include Plug-In To eCycling partners **Best Buy, HP, Dell, Intel, Toshiba,** and **Apple.**

**HP** recycled more than 164 million pounds of electronics hardware and printing supplies globally in 2006, including approximately 64 million pounds from initiatives in North, Central, and South America. This represents an increase of 17 percent from 2005, and the company expects to meet its goal to recycle 1 billion pounds of hardware and print cartridges globally by the end of 2007. HP supports a number of ongoing collection opportunities for consumers including online recycling for computers and monitors. Through its buy-back, leasing, and trade-in programs, HP collected approximately 50 million pounds (more than 2.5 million computer units) for reuse. During the summer and fall 2006, it launched a Recycling Tour, holding 11 local collection events in Colorado, New Mexico, Connecticut, Oregon, Illinois, Maryland, California, and Minnesota. These localized recycling events reached more than 4,000 individuals and diverted more than 600,000 pounds of electronics from entering landfills. HP also developed and distributed "Get In The Technology Loop!" curricula through its partnership with Scholastic—the global children's publishing, education, and media company—to raise student awareness of environmental issues related to technology. HP expects these materials to reach 12 million students.

**Intel** sponsored and cosponsored 27 collection events in 10 states, recycling more than 1.5 million pounds of electronics, a 25 percent increase from 2005. A strong advocate of reuse, Intel supports Students Recycling Used Technology (StRUT) and is a leading member of **eBay's Rethink initiative.**

**Lexmark** recycled approximately 5.5 million pounds of electronics through its Equipment Collection Program and from equipment returned from customers.

**NEC Display Solutions** recycled more than 1 million pounds of electronics in the United States and more than 3.5 million pounds globally. NEC recycled more than 450,000

pounds of NEC-branded products through ongoing collection efforts and approximately 600,000 pounds of equipment through Total Trade, its trade-in program targeting corporations. In February 2006, NEC Display Solutions formed an alliance with Computers For Schools, through which NEC Display Solutions donated more than 450 computer displays.

**Office Depot** collected more than 60,000 pounds of electronics during its three-month in-store collection and mail-back pilot, where customers paid for recycling electronics at retail locations. Office Depot also collected more than 6,500 ink and laser cartridges for recycling through its ongoing in-store take-back program.

**Panasonic** co-sponsored 194 events in 29 states, recycling more than 4.2 million pounds of electronics. **Sharp, Sony, JVC, Philips,** and **Toshiba** supported many of the same events across the country, which collected and recycled more than 500,000 pounds of electronics. **Sony** recycled more than 36,000 pounds of its own branded products through participation in these voluntary collection events.<sup>2</sup> **Sony** also offers consumers coupons or store credit for trading in old notebook PCs through its online Notebook Trade-In Program. **Toshiba's** Trade-In program, where consumers receive credit toward a new purchase for trading in used products, also includes options for recycling if the product is considered obsolete. In addition to supporting domestic recycling, **Toshiba** recycled more than 25 million pounds of TVs and 468,000 pounds of computers globally.

**Staples** collected more than 1.6 million pounds of electronics in 93 of its stores in 15 states. Collection events ranging from one day to two weeks were held in Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Montana, North Carolina, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Washington. Fourteen stores in the Seattle area currently offer ongoing fee-based collection for consumers throughout the year since they belong to the Pacific Northwest's Take It Back Network, a group of retailers, repair vendors, recyclers, and nonprofit groups that provide electronics collection and recycling services.

<sup>2</sup> In addition, Sony estimates that approximately 5.6 million pounds of Sony-branded products were recycled in California and over 200,000 pounds of Sony-branded products were recycled in Maine.





## Dell Expands Reconnect Partnership with Goodwill Industries

Dell partnered with Goodwill Industries to create the Reconnect Alliance, an innovative and sustainable program that enables consumers to conveniently donate or recycled unwanted electronics. Consumers can bring their used electronics to a participating Goodwill store or donation drop-off site in five states at no cost for resale or recycling. Proceeds from resale value of donations are returned to Goodwill Industries to support its mission of creating job opportunities for individuals with barriers to employment. Through this program, individuals gain valuable, transferable job skills in dismantling or refurbishing computers. In cases where electronics are not resold, Dell assists in recycling them. Prior to this year, Reconnect launched in Central Texas, San Francisco, and the state of Michigan. In 2006, Dell and Goodwill expanded the Reconnect Alliance to San Diego, Pittsburgh, 23 counties in South Texas and 49 of 100 counties in North Carolina. All Reconnect programs, now locally available to an estimated 10 million U.S. households, collected over 4 million pounds of electronics in 2006. For more information, go to: <[www.reconnectpartnership.com](http://www.reconnectpartnership.com)>



Dismantling computers at the Austin Goodwill

## Testing eCycling in Rural Communities

Consumers living near more urban and heavily populated regions in the United States often have more access to local eCycling opportunities than do those living in rural areas. High transportation costs due to a lack of nearby electronics recycling infrastructure can impede ongoing eCycling programs from taking root in rural communities.

In 2006, Montana's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) piloted its Rural Electronic Waste Recycling Program to provide the first series of electronics recycling opportunities to residents in communities throughout the state. These collection events recycled more than 330,000 pounds of electronics. Plug-In partners **Staples, JVC, Lexmark, Panasonic, Phillips, Sharp, Sony, Toshiba,** and **Best Buy** co-sponsored events in Helena, Missoula, and Butte and paid for the cost of recycling their brands. Results from this pilot project are helping Montana develop a voluntary electronics recycling program for the state.



Moreover, Plug-In partners **JVC, Lexmark, Panasonic, Philips, Sharp, Sony,** and **Toshiba** supported collection events across West Virginia by paying for the recycling costs of their branded products. The events, organized by the National Center for Electronics Recycling through a grant from the West Virginia High Technology Consortium Foundation, collected and recycled more than 230,000 pounds of electronics. For more information, go to: <[www.electronicrecycling.org/NCER](http://www.electronicrecycling.org/NCER)>

## Testing Fee-Based Recycling

In October 2006, Plug-In partners **Panasonic, Sharp, Toshiba, JVC, Philips,** and **Samsung** provided financial support for a series of eCycling events in eight communities in Minnesota, administered by Waste Management. These events tested fee-based recycling, where consumers paid \$10-25 to recycle obsolete monitors and televisions; nearly 45,000 pounds were collected. Plug-In partners are planning more events for the spring of 2007 at additional sites throughout the state.





## Pass It On!

Reuse benefits communities by giving others access to technology through donations and resale, and it conserves significant energy and resources otherwise used to manufacture new products.

### Benefits of Reuse vs. Recycling

In 2006, HP helped reuse approximately 2.5 million computers through its donation or resale channels. The energy and materials conserved are equal to saving enough electricity to power more than 560,000 U.S. homes, removing almost 400,000 cars from the road, and preventing more than 26 million metric tons of air emissions from being released each year. By contrast, recycling the same amount saves enough electricity to power 24,000 U.S. homes, removes almost 17,000 cars from the road, and prevents more than 1 million metric tons of air emissions from being released each year.

In 2006, EPA and its multi-stakeholder Plug-In To eCycling Reuse Working Group developed *Do the PC Thing*, a how-to fact sheet for consumers and businesses that addresses data security and sanitization, selecting donation recipients, and additional instructions for preparing one's computer for reuse. *Do the PC Thing* is available for download at: <[www.epa.gov/plugin](http://www.epa.gov/plugin)>.

## Pass It On Week

EPA and its Plug-In partners launched Pass It On Week, held April 16-23, 2006, to commemorate Earth Day, encouraging computer reuse and recycling in communities across the United States. As a result:

- Intel-sponsored events in Arizona, Colorado, Massachusetts, and New Jersey collected more than 420,000 pounds of electronics.
- Dell's Reconnect program collected more than 80,000 pounds of electronics in Michigan, Texas and California.

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- HP recycled approximately 75,000 pounds from events for employees.
- Staples collected approximately 200,000 pounds from events held in Chicago.
- Best Buy and Toshiba teamed up to collect more than 50,000 pounds from two collection events at Best Buy stores in Southern California.

Plug-In's Reuse Working Group also developed 100 Percent Day, an initiative within Pass It On Week, to track collections on Earth Day. Through this effort, more than 60,000 PCs were collected.

### Reducing Environmental Impacts Through Greener Design

The EPA-funded Electronic Products Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT) launched this year to great success. EPEAT is designed to help large institutional purchasers identify and buy green computers, laptops, and monitors. Products that are EPEAT registered are made with fewer harmful materials, incorporate recycled content, contain less packaging, and may contain recycling options. Since July 2006, more than 300 desktop computers, laptops, and monitors—many of which are manufactured by Plug-In To eCycling partners—now bear the EPEAT label and are available in the marketplace. Other manufacturers are currently registering products and EPEAT is already referenced in almost \$42 billion worth of U.S. government computer contracts. EPA conservatively estimates that over the next five years, purchases of EPEAT computers will result in reductions of:

More than 13 million pounds of hazardous waste.

More than 3 million pounds nonhazardous waste.

More than \$51 million in energy costs—saving enough to power 6 million homes.

Additional information is available at <[www.epeat.net](http://www.epeat.net)>.

