



## N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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### Computers, Electronic Devices Can Have a Second Life *Charlotte/Raleigh Workshops Highlight Electronics Recycling and Management*

RALEIGH -- Although increasing quantities of computers and electronics are being generated across the nation, recovery options for these products are in the formative stage. Daylong workshops this week in Charlotte and Raleigh address the status of electronics recycling in North Carolina, and mark the beginning of the education process as state solid waste officials and others consider ways to shape the state's electronics recycling process.

The workshops target the education of interested individuals, organizations, businesses and industries in North Carolina on the issues and background of electronics recycling; state and national laws and initiatives; the regulatory considerations of handling, disposing and recycling electronics; and the establishment of recycling programs for local governments and the private sector. Workshop presenters include representatives of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, International Association of Electronic Recyclers, N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), American Plastics Council, IBM and Sony. The Recycling Business Assistance Center, a partnership of DENR's [Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance \(DPPEA\)](#) and [The Department of Commerce \(DOC\)](#), sponsored the workshops in association with the Southern Waste Information eXchange (SWIX), a nonprofit industry clearinghouse.

Issues such as toxicity (as much as six to eight pounds of lead is present in computers and monitors); quantity (DPPEA's 1998 Recycling Market Assessment projects the annual disposal of over 50,000 tons of electronic goods); quality (large-scale consumers typically have high turnover of relatively standardized electronic equipment, enabling them to get some value out of their materials; small-scale consumers typically produce small quantities of non-standardized, obsolete equipment); and markets (recovery options, which include direct resale, refurbishment and repair, and dismantling and recycling) make electronics one of the most difficult waste streams to tackle.

"The growing stream of electronic wastes is of serious concern to the state of North Carolina," said Gary Hunt, DPPEA director. "Ensuring the safe management of these products will present a major challenge. Recycling will keep potentially harmful materials out of landfills while at the same time creating and expanding recycling businesses and jobs."

Existing efforts to rein in this waste stream tend to be limited to larger businesses, leaving small businesses and residents without viable recovery options. State recommendations to stimulate electronics recycling and ensure proper handling include:

- developing a management policy exempting CRTs from hazardous waste requirements when these materials are destined for recovery;
- providing grants for establishing electronics collection programs to encourage front-end collections by businesses, institutions and municipalities to help ensure that materials achieve their highest end use;
- developing state purchasing guidelines that support electronics recycling; and
- educating small businesses and residents about computer recycling options

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