

For information

Legislative Council Panel on Environmental Affairs

Disposal of Used Television Sets and the Management of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment

This paper informs Members of the Administration's measures to manage waste problem that may arise from the launch of digital terrestrial television (DTT) broadcasting, in response to a submission from the Green Sense to the Panel on Environmental Affairs on 16 January 2008.

Background

2. Since the launch of DTT broadcasting on 31 December 2007, there have been public concerns on its implications on the environment. These concerns mainly focus on (i) the increase in the disposal of cathode ray tube (CRT) television sets as a result of the launch of DTT; and (ii) the need to manage used television sets properly.

DTT Broadcasting and its Impact on the Replacement of Television Sets

3. The Government's policy is to introduce DTT broadcasting progressively. Following the launch of DTT in December 2007, its coverage will be expanded in phases in the following five years. In the meantime, the four original free TV channels will continue to simulcast in both analogue and digital format. As such, existing television sets can continue to receive analogue broadcasting and, with the installation of suitable set-top boxes, can also receive DTT broadcasting, including the new digital channels. While the Government plans to terminate analogue broadcasting in 2012, the actual timing will depend on public response, as well as market and technological development.

4. Local and overseas experiences show that the replacement of electrical and electronic equipment would usually be a gradual process. For example, the launch of a new Windows software in 2007 and the introduction of liquid crystal display and plasma television sets a few years ago have not led to a massive replacement of computer equipment and television sets within a short period, nor has there been any noticeable increase in the landfill disposal of waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE). Taking into account the above experience and factors, we expect that the public will replace their old television sets

gradually as necessary in the future. Nevertheless, the Government will continue to disseminate green messages to the public on the use and disposal of television sets.

Management of WEEE

Recovery and Recycling of WEEE

5. The EPD has been actively promoting the recovery and recycling of WEEE. According our statistics, over 80% of the WEEE (including television sets) are recovered and less than 20% would be disposed of at landfills. Since January 2003, we have engaged social service organizations to organize trial recovery programmes for computers and electrical appliances. We have also been organizing an annual territory-wide WEEE Recycling Day since end 2005. Through these programmes and activities, used electronic and electrical equipment (including old television sets) of better condition recovered are repaired and donated to the needy, while the remaining appliances are recycled. Over 240,000 used electronic and electrical appliances have been processed as a result.

6. The introduction of producer responsibility schemes (PRSs) for certain products to reduce waste and promote recovery and recycling is an integral part of our strategy for the management of municipal solid waste. In this connection, the Government has already introduced the Product Eco-responsibility Bill (PER Bill) into the Legislative Council to provide the legal basis for that. While the environmental levy on plastic shopping bags will be the first statutory PRS under the PER Bill, the Bill will also enable the Government to introduce PRS's where necessary for other products, including electrical and electronic equipment.

7. Meanwhile, we have been encouraging manufacturers and suppliers to introduce voluntary PRSs to recover and recycle WEEE. In this connection, a territory-wide Computer Recycling Programme (CRP) has recently been launched to promote the reuse and recycling of used computer equipment. Funded by 20 local and international computer equipment suppliers, the CRP aims to recover 50,000 units of used computer equipment annually in the first two years of its operation, of which 10% will be refurbished for donation purposes and the remaining recycled. Starting from late February 2008, the public can bring their used computer equipment to fourteen designated public collection points. To further facilitate public participation, the CRP's recycler will from March 2008 onwards provide collection service at some 600 participating buildings and estates according to a district collection schedule. Building on the experience of the CRP, we will explore with the key

suppliers of electrical appliances and other stakeholders the feasibility of introducing a voluntary trade-funded WEEE recycling programme.

Disposal of WEEE

8. Under the Waste Disposal Ordinance, operators of any disposal facilities for WEEE which are classified as chemical waste (including the discarded CRTs of television sets) are required to obtain a licence from the EPD. Applicants are required to submit an operational plan detailing the waste handling methods, the operation of the facilities, the experience of the management personnel and the pollution control and monitoring measures, etc. for the EPD's consideration. Licensed chemical waste disposal facilities must strictly comply with the licence terms and conditions to ensure that their operation will not cause any pollution to the environment. The EPD will regularly inspect licensed disposal facilities. Non-compliance with the licence terms and conditions, or the disposal of chemical waste without a licence is an offence liable to a fine of \$200,000 and imprisonment for six months upon conviction. Moreover, the generation of dust, noise, effluent discharge and waste, if any, during the operation of the disposal facilities is subject to control under the Air Pollution Control Ordinance, the Noise Control Ordinance, the Water Pollution Control Ordinance and the Waste Disposal Ordinance respectively. The operators of any disposal facilities must ensure that the operation of their workshops complies with the requirements of the above ordinances.

9. Under the Waste Disposal Ordinance, a permit is required for the import and export of hazardous waste, including CRTs of discarded television sets. Applicants of a permit have to, inter alia, prove that the waste will be managed in an environmentally sound manner, and in the case of waste export, that the recipient country has consented to the import of such waste. Import and export of hazardous waste without a valid permit from the EPD is an offence liable to a fine of \$200,000 and imprisonment for six months upon conviction. The EPD has also issued guidelines on the appropriate measures to be undertaken by operators who import or export used electrical and electronic equipment as second-hand goods, including proper inspection and repairing of such products, maintenance of proper records for such inspection and repairing works, proper packaging of such products before their shipment, etc. These will facilitate operator's compliance with the control requirements under the Waste Disposal Ordinance.

**Environmental Protection Department
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