

## Develop a Flat Screen Transition Plan to Keep Old TVs Out of Landfills

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You have probably seen the cartoons where there is a devil on one person's shoulder and an angel on the other, with each tiny character trying to convince the person to do what it believes is right. Well, that scenario has been playing out with me this holiday season as I walk the aisles of my favorite electronics stores. The little devil on one side has been pushing me to buy a flat screen TV; the little angel (eco-angel, I guess) has been telling me to wait. Guys, I am sure you can relate to this. Ladies, maybe some of you as well. Quite the quandary, wouldn't you agree?

Multiply my situation by tens of thousands across our industry. Many luxury chains have been making the transition to flat screen, high definition TVs for quite some time. High-end travelers used to watching flat screens at home now expect the same when on the road. In the next couple of years, hotels at every level that do not make the transition to flat screens will run the risk of not meeting guest expectations.

This technology trend will have huge environmental consequences as millions of old television sets end up in landfills. The responsible thing to do is not throw old TVs away. Why? Many of their components are toxic. They include mercury, lead, cadmium, arsenic and other harmful substances. In a landfill, these can leach into the ground and eventually into our water supply. Now, more than ever, it is important to understand the magnitude of this problem. According to John Shegerian, co-founder and CEO of [Electronic Recyclers, Inc.](#), Fresno, Calif., there are currently 268 million TVs in the United States. Eighty million of those will be thrown away in the next two years, many due to the switchover from analog to digital broadcasting on February 17, 2009. Once you are ready to toss away those old TVs, what are your options?

### California Leads in TV Recycling

- If you live in California, where a landfill ban on anything that includes a cathode ray tube (CRT) is entering its fourth year, there are many ways to recycle electronic waste (e-waste). In most other states, where there are no landfill bans, you will have to do some work to find landfill alternatives. Many communities have drop-off locations for e-waste. Watch for announcements; sometimes these events are monthly or less often. The [Electronic Recyclers](#) website includes a search engine to find drop-off locations or agencies that might be open to taking used TVs.
- If the televisions are still functional, you may want to try to sell them on websites such as [www.ebay.com](#) or [www.liquidationconnect.com](#). Also check out [www.freecycle.org](#), a site for advertising items that you wish to give away.

- Lobby your local and state politicians to change the laws in your state. Educate them about the dangers of e-waste and the opportunities to create new businesses to handle recycling. There are precious metals—gold, silver, platinum—in e-waste. Plastics, glass and other metals also can be recycled. In California, a \$6 to \$10 fee is added onto any product that has a CRT. This fee helps pay for e-waste recycling. The program is working well. In 2005, the state recycled more than 65 million pounds of electronic waste. In 2006: more than 120 million pounds. This year, the total should be around 200 million pounds.
- Watch the [Electronic Recyclers](#) website for expansion plan announcements. The company intends to open 10 more recycling facilities in the next 18 months.
- All e-waste needs to be properly managed. Computers, cell phones and other electronic devices should also be recycled. Some computer companies such as Sony, Dell and Hewlett-Packard offer take-back programs.

Two million tons of e-waste is thrown away by Americans each year. E-waste is the fastest growing waste stream in the world. The lodging industry should not be contributing to this problem. Be sure to develop a plan for your old TVs, or any electronic equipment for that matter, before purchasing replacements. If you have a positive (or negative) experience to share about your attempts to recycle your old TVs, contact me by phone or e-mail. I am interested in learning more about this issue.