



Green

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Today's News:

ECONOMY'S ROLE IN NEW ENVIRONMENTAL legislation and regulations can't be discounted, say officials. (P. 1)

ENERGY EFFICIENCY: Sun unveils energy-efficient data centers at Colorado facility. (P. 2)

E-WASTE: Hazards abound in recycling cellphones and other handhelds, U.K. processor warns. (P. 2)

INTERNATIONAL: Plasma TVs won't be banned under EU's Energy-using Products Directive, says European high-tech group. (P. 3)

STATE ACTIVITIES: California green technology effort provides economic stimulus, report shows. (P. 3)

COMPANIES: Sun supports European Code of Conduct for Data Centers. (P. 3)

Energy Cuts Planned

Economy May Slow State E-Waste, Efficiency Regulations

Legislators and regulators are certain to consider state budget shortfalls in decisions on new environmental legislation and regulations, officials said. But the specific outcomes this year aren't clear.

Some environmental groups are taking the budget situation into account as they decide on their lobbying efforts in state legislatures. The Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships is still having discussions on "how we are going to approach" the issue, said Project Manager Isaac Elnecave. The group has been lobbying for energy-efficiency legislation for consumer electronics, especially for set-top boxes, the past three years. "Obviously the economic situation changes the calculus of what we are thinking of doing," Elnecave said. The group expects to settle on its strategy this month, he said.

The economy is going to be "more front and center" in the states at least the next two legislative sessions, said Adam Schafer, executive director of the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators. There's "no doubt that environmental or any type of regulation that is going to take dollars that could be going to other things that may be deemed a greater priority will be a challenge this year," he said. "I don't think e-waste is separate from many of those on that issue." There's been talk about rolling back planned chemicals regulations, like California's green-chemistry rules, that would likely place a "big burden" on the states. Schafer said he hasn't heard of plans to pull back on proposed e-waste legislation. "But I think in general there is not going to be much dollars available for anything."

The worsening economic situation should provide a "greater incentive" for states to pass e-waste producer responsibility laws, said Scott Cassel, the executive director of the Product Stewardship Institute. That's because e-waste programs don't rely on state money, he said. The institute advises and represents state and local governments on recycling policy. Setting up e-waste collection and recycling services that manufacturers pay for will be one

way that states consider helping localities when they otherwise would have to make decisions that “financially hurt” local governments, said Seigo Jackson, principal planner of Washington’s Snohomish County. Jackson, who represents localities in federal e-waste negotiations, said he has been hearing “positive comments” from state legislators about extended producer responsibility legislation.

Barbara Kyle of the Electronics TakeBack Coalition said she doesn’t foresee slowing of the introduction of state e-waste legislation this year because of bleak economic conditions. It takes two to three years for an e-waste program to start after a measure is enacted, she said. “I think the state will see past what we are hoping is a short-term decline,” Kyle said. E-waste mandates won’t add to states’ costs because manufacturers will be asked to build the expenses into their prices, she said. And in state-run programs, the costs are covered by manufacturer registration fees, she said.

The economy shouldn’t affect a state’s decision to impose energy-efficiency regulations, said Andrew deLaski of the Appliance Standards Awareness Project. “If anything, it would probably increase states’ interest in efficiency standards.” Standards offer a way to improve efficiency at low cost to states, he said. His group advocates electronics and other appliance efficiency regulations in the states. Worries about energy security and climate change remain high and will prompt energy-efficiency regulations, he said. “There is a growing understanding that when you save consumers money through efficiency that puts money back in the pocket, which is good for other goods and services which helps spur economic activity.”

“I am optimistic that states with budgetary concerns are looking at energy cost as a way to save money,” said Ben Taube, the executive director of the Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance. Many states are setting targets for cutting energy use, and reducing energy consumption is a goal of the federal government’s economic stimulus package, he said. “So states are going to get involved in reducing energy regardless of their financial status.” --
Dinesh Kumar

Energy Efficiency

Sun Microsystems recently completed its largest data-center consolidation. The change is projected to save more than \$1 million in electricity and save 11,000 tons of CO2 yearly, Sun said. The effort at the company's Broomfield, Colo., facility, will help Sun reduce its U.S. carbon footprint 6 percent, it said.

E-Waste

Europeans recycle their cellphones, but there’s a security hitch. Most handsets submitted for recycling hold information that could be sensitive, Regeneris, a U.K. disposal company, said Friday. It processed 2 million handsets last year. Of 2,000 mobiles offered for recycling the first week of December, 99 percent held personal data that could compromise the donors’ security, the company said. The information included contacts, SMS messages, photos, music, videos, calendar entries, e-mails, personal notes, mailing lists and to-do lists. “In some cases, extremely sensitive information was contained, including bank details, addresses, and confidential e-mails,” Regeneris said. It advised donors to erase or delete all information on devices submitted for recycling. “This can often take as long as 30 minutes, depending on the complexity of the handset,” the company said. “Only the most reputable firms bother to do this essential work. Our advice to consumers is to check with the recycling firm to confirm that all data will be removed.”

Nokia started a cellphone take-back campaign in India’s capital New Delhi this month and intends to extend it throughout the country in phases, the Press Trust of India reported. Nokia stores will accept used chargers as well as phones, it said.

International

EICTA, the European Union digital technology association, called "factually incorrect" news reports that the Energy-using Products Directive will mean a ban on plasma TV technology. Under the directive, "a technology such as plasma cannot be banned from the market as long as the TV sets using the technology comply with the energy efficiency requirements," the group said. The EU and member states are working on new regulations to cut energy use of TVs "across all technologies," it said. "All manufacturers will be required to meet these new minimum efficiency standards in order to continue producing, importing and selling TV sets on the European market."

State Activities

California's green technology effort has provided billions in economic stimulus, said a report on the California Green Innovation Index. It said gross domestic product produced per unit of energy is 68 percent higher in California than elsewhere in the country. Since 2005 in the state, green jobs have grown at 10 times as fast as jobs overall, the report said.

Companies

Sun Microsystems endorsed the European Code of Conduct for Data Centers, designed to get data center users to reduce energy consumption. The company said it would use its influence in the industry to promote the code.



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