

# **Proposed Practices for Shipment and Control of Used Computer Monitors and Televisions for the Purpose of Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste**

## **Purpose**

This paper proposes some general criteria for triggering detailed investigation on suspicious shipments of used computer monitors and televisions for the purpose of transboundary movement control for consideration and comment of the members of Asian Network. The criteria are compiled based on the findings and understanding of Hong Kong on the trade of used computer monitors and televisions and their general usage in Asia.

## **Background**

2. In the past few years, there was an increase in used cathode-ray tube (CRT) computer monitors and televisions exported to developing countries in the Asia Pacific region under the name of “second-hand” goods. However, the majority, if not all, of them were exported for dismantling or recycling with a view to recovering the usable parts or materials, in particular the CRTs in them. Some information shows that these recovered CRTs would be reused in the manufacturing of new but substandard monitors and televisions in the region.

3. Waste CRTs are classified as hazardous waste worldwide. Their disposal in developed countries is costly. Export to developing countries provides a convenient and cheap solution as well as business opportunities to waste collectors and traders in these countries. A “double” profit can be made by charging waste producers for disposal of the unwanted computer monitors and televisions on the one hand and selling these obsolete articles to developing countries on the other, which would otherwise have to be disposed of at high cost at local facilities.

4. Under Article 2(1) of the Basel Convention, “wastes” means any substances or objects which are disposed of or are intended to be disposed of or are required to be disposed of by the provisions of national law. As such, obsolete/used computers monitors and televisions destined for dismantling and recycling overseas are waste that subject to control of the Basel Convention irrespective whether they are still workable or can be sold for a price.

5. In view of the above, majorities of the used (or so-called second-hand) CRT computer monitors and televisions exported from developed countries to developing countries are waste and should therefore follow the prior notification and consent requirement of the Basel Convention. To distinguish waste from “used” or “second-hand” goods would be a challenging as well as a difficult task to many control authorities, in particular to frontline enforcement officers. Unscrupulous waste traders always try to step into the grey area of control, covering up their smuggling of controlled waste through false customs declaration, and in some odd cases, wrangle with control authorities on the applicability of regulatory control requirements. A common standard amongst importing and exporting countries for identifying suspicious waste shipments of this kind would be essential to curbing illegal transboundary movements in the Asia Pacific region. In addition, it would help building up a good practice for the import and export trade to follow.

### **Waste or Second-hand Commodity**

6. The word “second-hand” is ambiguous in its meaning. Different people have different perception and interpretation over the words. For instance, it may describe an article that has changed ownership or simply that it can be traded in the market for a price. Nonetheless, there is a common misconception that a used article should not be waste if it can be sold for a price or someone seeks after it. To provide a definition for it agreeable to all parties concerned would be very difficult, if not impossible.

7. However, most people would agree that if the used computer monitors or televisions are genuine second-hand commodities to be sold to consumers for reused direct overseas, traders should have the interest to select the re-saleable ones and protect them from damages during transportation overseas in order to secure a best price for them in the sale. Building upon this common concept, for the purpose of transboundary waste movement control, one can set out some recommended practices for handling of used computer monitors and televisions for adoption of the trade, if these articles are to be exported or imported as second-hand commodities. These practices would in turn help enforcement staff in identifying suspected shipment of waste CRT monitors and televisions.

8. Compliance with the recommended practice will automatically invoke the

presumption that the used electronics are not waste, unless there is other evidence indicating to the contrary. On the other hand, failing to meet the requirements would raise reasonable suspicion to the control authority over the shipment of used electronics and detailed investigation should be carried out to check and clarify whether the used electronics were controlled waste under the Basel Convention and local legislation.

### **Recommended Practices**

9. For the propose of protecting the environment and human health of developing countries in the Asia Pacific region, it is necessary and essential to exercise reasonably stringent practices to effectively screen out illegal waste shipments for enforcement and control purposes. It must be aware that poor handling practices may result in damages to part or all of the genuine “second-hand” goods during transportation and eventually render them waste before reaching the importing countries and such message be passed to traders as far as possible to alleviate unnecessary repercussion from them.

10. For the purpose of the transboundary movement control, the following practice is recommended for adoption by traders, importers and exporters of second-hand commodities in selecting and dealing with their used computer monitors and televisions before export:

- i. Select only those used computer monitors and televisions of reasonably new models and ages that there is genuine demand for such second-hand products importing countries. In any case, it is advisable to avoid any unit with over 5 years from the date of manufacturing;
- ii. Arrange examination, repairing, retrofitting and testing of the used computer monitors and televisions to ensure that these used electronics are in good conditions meeting both the technical specifications and safety standard of the destined countries and suitable for reuse as such direct by consumers before they are exported. In any case, no damaged or non-working items should be allowed in the shipment;
- iii. Properly record the examination, repairing and testing results of each of the

used computer monitors and televisions, which should include their brand names, models and serial nos., years of manufacturing, problems/damages found and fixed, dates and results of compliance testing conducted. Testing should be done not more than 2 years before shipment to the State of Import. All the above information should be made available to the concerned control authority for inspection and checking upon request;

- iv. Provide proper and sufficient individual protective packaging to each of the used computer monitors and televisions to protect the WHOLE unit from damage during transportation and the associated loading and unloading operations. There should not be any direct physical contact between each unit and the packaging should be able to withstand the weight of the units placed on it. There should be legible labels or signs (e.g. with unique serial numbers) on the packaging to identify each item. Photos of the packaging should be provided, if considered necessary, to the relevant control authority for advice; and
- v. Make prior contractual arrangement with concerned parties in the importing countries to secure proper second-hand outlet. Confirm with the control authorities of the importing countries on whether import of used computer monitors and televisions is allowable and whether the consignee or buyer is permitted to import them for sale as second-hand commodities.

11. Whenever any shipment of used computer monitors or televisions is encountered, the concerned control authority should check and confirm whether the above recommended practices have been complied with. Otherwise, it should be considered as waste unless the concerned parties can furnish additional and satisfactory proof to the contrary or it is allowed by relevant local legislation for some specific purpose.

### **Inspection and Investigation**

12. In carrying out the inspection & investigation, the control authority should ensure all the following requirements are complied with -

- a. Detailed examination, repairing and testing records for each of the used

monitors and televisions are available for verification of the control authority and the information match with those found in inspection;

- b. Adequate individual packaging is provide to used electronics to provide sufficient protection to the whole other articles from damage during the transportation, loading and unloading operations;
- c. Not more than 10% of the monitors and televisions in the shipment inspected are more than 5 years old from the date of manufacturing;
- d. Not more than 10% of the monitors and televisions in the shipment inspected are found to be damaged or non-working. Physical damage refers to damage to any parts of the monitors or televisions including their casings, screens, power and signal cables, etc. (see Appendix I for the damages);
- e. Confirmation of the existence of second-hand markets for the used electronics with the Competent Authority of the State of Import, if necessary.

13. Failing to comply with any of the above requirements should be considered as non-compliance with the recommended practices. The shipment should be regarded as hazardous waste. In line with the Basel Convention requirement, the shipment in question should be stopped from export at the loading port of the exporting country or returned in case the shipment is intercepted at the importing country or any country-in-transit.

### **Establishing the Existence of Second-hand Markets**

14. To facilitate control authorities of exporting countries and countries-in-transit to exercise efficient control at their ports, it is recommended for each member of the Asian Network to compile (either by legal or administrative means) a list of “registered” second-hand electronic goods dealers who are running a legal business in the sale of such goods in their local markets; the list should include the capacity of the dealer in each type of electronic goods. It is also recommended to place such information on the website of Asian Network accessible to all Members for reference in their enforcement and control work. Members should inform the Network as soon as reasonably practicable the updating of such information from time to time.

**Recommendations**

15. Asian Network Members are requested to consider the recommended practices proposed in paragraphs 10 to 14 for adoption in all Member States.

**Environmental Protection Department  
Hong Kong SAR, China  
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**Damages of Computer Monitors and Television Commonly Found**



Power and signal cables removed.



Signal cable removed.



CRT screen panel broken.



CRT burnt.



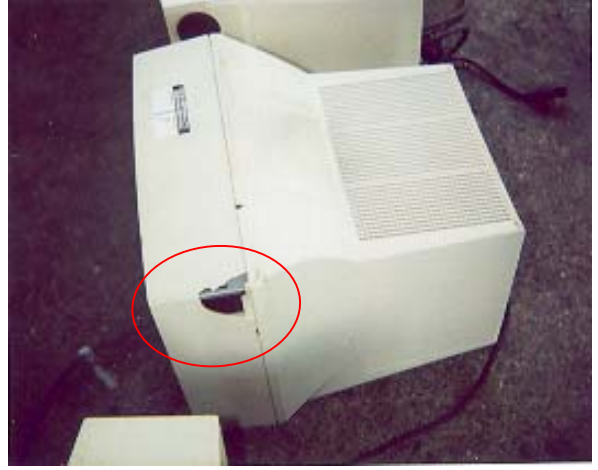
Casing damaged and power cable removed.



Casing damaged.



Casing Damaged



Casing damaged



Casing broken and loosened



Casing broken and loosened