

EU's e-waste rules affect global market

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Three European Union rules on e-waste -- used computer hardware -- likely will touch off a ripple effect beyond Europe, a U.S. researcher says.

Two e-waste measures require manufacturers to dispose of consumers' electronic equipment free and bar exporting hazardous materials to developing countries for disposal, Brown University said in a news release. The third requires registration and evaluation of more than 30,000 chemical substances.

"The e-waste problem has grown dramatically," said Stacy D. VanDeveer, a visiting fellow at Brown's Watson Institute for International Studies. She and Henrik Selin, an assistant professor of international relations at Boston University, wrote an article on the regulations for the journal *Environment*.

The rules address a growing concern about environmental and human risks posed by discarded chemicals and electronics, she said. However, they may adversely impact the economy.

VanDeveer and Selin said most firms operating internationally prefer to produce products to as few different standards as possible, usually opting to follow the most stringent ones.

The European market size should push U.S. and Asian manufacturers to meet European standards, increasing "green" product availability, the authors said. Also, toxic risk information may allow environmental

advocates to focus their efforts with specific data.

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