

Old TVs bad landfill reception

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When U.S. broadcasters switch to digital transmissions, millions of viewers will likely discard analog televisions creating a potential environmental disaster.

Television sets contain toxic substances like lead, mercury and cadmium, and when televisions are sent to landfills or shipped to other countries for dismantling, those substances are sent with them, the Baltimore Sun reported.

The Consumer Electronics Association, which represents manufacturers, said the impact of the switch will be diffused, because buying a new television doesn't necessarily coincide with throwing out the old set, the newspaper said.

But environmentalist groups told the Sun the waste system is clogged with old televisions from the 36 million U.S. households that have upgraded to high-definition or plasma TV.

The federal government will give households vouchers to buy converters for their old televisions, which could encourage consumers to hang on to their old models.

Recycling is also an option for old sets but most consumers don't use it, the Sun said. Only about 2.5 million of the more than 20 million televisions thrown away in 2005 were recycled, Environmental Protection Agency statistics indicated.

A few states have required manufacturers to take some responsibility for ensuring their products are recycled.

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