

Solar panel manufacturing and disposal -- is it green and safe?

April 11 2011, By Tiffany Hsu

Major solar companies aren't just prioritizing market share and installed megawatts these days, according to a study that contends that the environmental and health effects of photovoltaic panels also are becoming a major consideration.

In its most recent Solar Scorecard, the nonprofit advocacy group [Silicon Valley](#) Toxics Coalition ranked international solar manufacturers on factors such as extraction of the raw materials, toxic chemical use in production, worker safety issues, product disposal, recycling and more.

German company SolarWorld nabbed the top score of 91, followed by Trina Solar in China. Next came a three-way tie among Abound and First Solar in the U.S. and REC of Norway. SunPower, based in San Jose, Calif., trailed close behind.

The 15 companies included in the study represent nearly half of the solar photovoltaic industry by market share. Of those, just two said their products contained no [cadmium](#) or lead.

But 13 said they conducted audits and monitored their supply chain for environmental, health and safety issues. Eleven said they would publicly support a law that would require companies to take back and recycle panels at the end of their life.

All five of the manufacturers that said they had undergone the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Toxicity Characteristic Leaching

Procedure test and passed, meaning that their photovoltaic modules are not considered to be [hazardous waste](#).

Three companies took two similar tests offered by the state of California. One company failed both tests, and the two others each failed one.

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