

US video game sales fell 4 percent in March

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(AP) -- U.S. retail sales of video game systems, games and accessories fell 4 percent in March as game software sales declined, according to new data from an industry group.

Market researcher NPD Group said Thursday that consumers spent \$1.47 billion on games, consoles, portable devices and accessories during March. This compares with sales of \$1.53 billion in March 2010. When including sales of PC games, March sales totaled \$1.53 billion, which was still a 4 percent drop from \$1.58 billion last year.

Sales of gaming hardware such as Nintendo Co.'s hand-held Nintendo 3DS climbed 12 percent to \$494.5 million from \$440.6 million last year. NPD analyst Anita Frazier said the Nintendo DS was the top system, selling about 100,000 more units than the Nintendo 3DS, which was released stateside on March 27.

Frazier added that sales of Sony Corp.'s [PlayStation 3](#) console and [PlayStation Portable](#) handheld [gaming device](#) and Microsoft Corp.'s Xbox 360 console rose year over year. The PSP in particular was helped by a \$40 price drop at the start of the month, she said.

Sales of [game software](#) - physical games for consoles and portable players - dropped 16 percent. NPD does not include game downloads or online games in its monthly sales data, so the numbers can show a decline even if more people are playing those.

On the list of top-selling games - which includes games for consoles,

portable players and PCs - Nintendo's "Pokemon White Version" took the No. 1 spot in March, and "Pokemon Black Version" took the No. 2 spot (according to Nintendo, the two sold more than 2.5 million games total). "Homefront" from THQ came in third.

Frazier noted that last March included several popular new games such as "Final Fantasy XIII," "Battlefield: Bad Company 2" and "God of War 3" - each of which sold more than a million units that month.

Sales of gaming accessories, which includes products such as Microsoft's Kinect motion controller, rose 13 percent to \$241.3 million. The month's top accessory was the \$20 PS3 network card, Frazier said. Such cards can be used to download things such as games, movies or new game content.

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