Inside the U.S. Electronics Recycling Industry

According to a new report by the well-respected International Data Corporation (IDC), a global market research provider with nearly 50 years of experience in information technology and consumer technology markets, the U.S. electronics recycling industry has grown quickly and tremendously in the past decade and is a bright spot in an otherwise sluggish economy. While varied organizations have issued studies in the past, the new IDC report is among the most comprehensive, definitive and exhaustive studies of a relatively young industry that is written about often but not as often portrayed accurately.

In 2010 the U.S. electronics recycling industry:

- Contributed **$5.2 billion** to the U.S. economy (up from less than $1 billion in 2002)
- Employed more than **30,000 full-time employees** (up from 6,000 in 2002 and when non-profit organizations are includes, could be above 45,000 in 2010)
- Collected and processed domestically more than **3.5 million tons** of used and end-of-life electronics in 2010 (up from 600,000 tons in 2002).

Of the 3.5 million tons being collected and recycled in America, 70% by weight is processed in the United States and sold at home or the global marketplace as commodity grade scrap, such as steel, aluminum, copper, precious metals recovered from circuit boards, glass and plastics. Ten percent is resold as functioning equipment and components for direct resell, and less than 18% is resold as equipment and components for further repair and refurbishment. **The bottom line is that used and end-of-life electronics are being recycled right here in America, not "dumped" overseas as we've been led to believe.**

While American households account for most of the new electronics market, they only contribute about 26% to the electronics recycling market. Indeed, 74.1% of the electronics being recycled in the America originate from business and commercial entities. **This is a clear challenge that must be addressed by incentives to increase collection and recycling of used residential and household electronics equipment.** If this market is tapped, U.S. recyclers will create more jobs here at home and significantly reduce the used or end-of-life electronics that end up in a landfill. U.S. electronics recyclers want to process and sell commodities and used electronics products, not see it in landfill because of misguided policies.

Given the tremendous growth of the U.S. electronics recycling industry, recyclers and consumers increasingly are demanding downstream accountability, data security and legal compliance domestically and abroad. **An increase in third-party audited, comprehensive, premium recycling standards like R2/RIOS™ are expected to increase and will help recyclers' accountability, health and safety and bottom line**.

Conclusion: *The U.S. electronics recycling industry is a vibrant industry that is largely made in America, recycled by American workers and processed as high-quality commodities or functioning equipment sold in America and abroad. If household consumers of electronics can be driven to recycle more of their electronics, more U.S. jobs will be created along with more positive, indirect economic impacts. Increasingly, recyclers and consumers believe and are willing to invest in – certifications such as R2/RIOS™ and R2 that ensure data security and downstream due diligence.*