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Cost to Recycle Televisions Results in Program Changes in Kent County

Grand Rapids – It seems most households now have flat-screen televisions these days, but many people may still have an older Cathode Ray Tube (CRT) television in their home. Kent County Department of Public Works (DPW) has collected 5.6 million pounds of electronics, including televisions, since 2001, without charging residents a fee. These items are processed by a third-party recycler. CRT televisions contains approximately 5-10 pounds of lead, a toxic component for our environment that can cause a variety of health issues. Due to the increasing cost of recycling televisions, Kent County DPW will begin charging a recycling fee starting February 16.

In the past, television manufacturers supported recycling programs by working with approved and certified recyclers. More recently, these companies have limited or completely removed their support of Michigan's recycling programs. Electronics are not banned from landfills in Michigan, but pose an environmental hazard when thrown in the trash.

The North Kent Transfer Station, South Kent Landfill and Recycling & Education Center will begin charging recycling fees based on the diagonal size of the television: \$10 for televisions 27" or smaller and \$20 for televisions larger than 27" for Kent County residents with proper identification. For residents outside Kent County, fees will be \$15 and \$30 based on the diagonal dimension. It is anticipated that the fees for Kent County residents will pay for approximately one-half of Kent County's actual cost of recycling, depending on the size of the television.

"We recognize the fact that fees can discourage people from recycling, but we want to protect our environment," said Kristen Wieland, Kent County Resource Recovery and Recycling Manager. "We don't want these televisions to end up in the trash. This fee structure will help Kent County to continue to recycle televisions in an environmentally responsible manner while controlling our costs for providing this important service."

This cost-share program allows Kent County to continue to accept televisions, but share the responsibility of recycling them with the consumer until the State of Michigan enacts a more robust electronics recycling framework. Kent County's contracted electronics recycling provider, Comprenew, has publically shared their concern about the issue surrounding television and other electronics recycling at the state level.

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“At the end of the day, this issue is about what kind of environment we want here in Michigan,” said Comprenew President, Scott Vander Kooy. “Solving this issue means we need to ban electronics from landfills and require that manufacturers who sell in Michigan take care of Michigan – just as they must do in other states.”

“This issue is not one that Kent County is facing alone,” said Wieland. “Every organization that collects or processes electronics for recycling in Michigan has had to make difficult decisions to attempt to manage the flood of CRT televisions in residents’ basements and garages. There is no easy fix to this.”

Televisions are the only electronic item that will be assessed a fee for recycling. Other electronics will continue to be accepted at no charge. Electronics must be delivered to Kent County with all cases and wiring still intact. Televisions and other electronics with the wiring and/or circuit boards removed will not be accepted. For more information on this issue and to see a complete list of accepted electronics for recycling, visit Kent County’s website at www.recyclekent.org/televisions.

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