BREAKING: Abandoned warehouses full of CRTs found in several states

By Jerry Powell, Resource Recycling

As part of an investigation into CRT glass recycling markets, E-Scrap News has learned that recycling processors in several states have abandoned operations after charging CRT suppliers and filling up a handful of warehouses with more than 10,000 tons of CRTs and CRT glass. State officials are now struggling with how to manage these problems.

Possibly the most serious of the abandonments is the closure of Luminous Recycling in Denver. Two environmental experts who have toured the site say that the situation inside the warehouse is very serious due to extremely dusty conditions. An East Coast handler of collected CRTs toured the plant after it had closed, telling E-Scrap News that the plant “was an environmental disaster.” A key player in the CRT glass recycling market who also toured the site estimates that the warehouse holds about 8,000 tons of CRT glass. Efforts to contact officials at Luminous Recycling resulted in no responses.

Also of concern to environmental officials is the abandonment of CRT facilities in Yuma, Arizona operated by Dow Management. An industry member who has toured two of the warehouses estimates they contain more than 3,000 tons of CRTs and CRT glass. Notably, CRT suppliers from California and Washington, who work under state electronics recycling programs, sent CRTs to Dow Management. For example, nearly 4,400 tons of CRTs and CRT glass were sent to the Yuma warehouses by 10 California-approved processors during an 18-month period ending this summer. KYO Computer, Inc. was the largest shipper, sending 1,444 tons to Dow Management during this period. Also shipping materials was the eWaste Center, which sent CRTs and CRT glass to the sites from both its California and Washington plants. None of the 10 firms are R2- or e-Stewards-certified.

State officials in California and Washington have now called on the suppliers of CRTs and glass to the Yuma sites to work with the warehouse owners to have the CRT scrap removed. California officials have given the 10 state-regulated suppliers two weeks to take back the CRTs and have them recycled properly.

Efforts to reach officials from Dow Management were unsuccessful.

The investigation by E-Scrap News suggests that the Arizona and Colorado situations are not the only problems in CRT recycling. Several industry players say a Maryland operator also went out of business, leaving a large quantity of CRTs. New York officials are looking into allegations that a Pennsylvania processor may be having problems moving cut CRT glass to markets. Nonetheless, a survey of 27 state e-scrap management officials by E-Scrap News indicates that no CRT processor in those states has received an exemption for the speculative accumulation of CRTs, as mandated under a current U.S. EPA regulation. The regulation essentially requires a CRT processor to recycle 75 percent of the CRTs it accepts in any calendar year. If they stockpile more than 25 percent of their receipts, the firm must seek an exemption.

A full summary of this research will be presented on September 12 at 1:00 p.m. at the E-Scrap Conference in Orlando, Florida.

CORRECTION: The original version of this article quoted an individual who toured the Luminous Recycling plant while it was in operation. In fact, the individual toured the plant after it had closed and did not observe it in operation. E-Scrap News regrets the error.

eWaste Center Response and Action

At eWaste Center, we consistently strive to maintain the most stringent and responsible downstream due diligence with all of the vendors we work with. We would like to note that we are currently in the process of becoming ISO14001 and R2 certified.

Regarding our relationship with Dow Management, we did everything in our power to ensure that we were working with a responsible vendor for CRT glass. We ensured that they had the proper licenses and paperwork, and performed an on-site audit of Dow Management’s facility back in August of 2012 to ensure we were working with a responsible vendor. During this audit, we were aware of some of the stakeholders of Dow Management who were planning to discontinue their operations.
responsible recycler. During this audit however, we were never made aware of the fact that the stakeholders of Dow Management had two other warehouse locations where they were stockpiling their glass.

After the discovery of what happened in Arizona, we immediately took action and dispatched a team to Yuma to assess the situation and take proper remedies. Along with one other company, we were the first to proactively begin removal, contracting TDM (CaliResources) to remove all of the CRT glass from Dow Management’s warehouses.

Companies such as ours that had chosen to work with Dow are victims of fraud. We placed good faith in the licenses, documents and facility that were presented to us and we were taken advantage of by deceitful individuals. Making matters worse, we had paid hundreds of thousands of dollars for services that were never rendered, and the likelihood that Dow Management will reimburse us is slim to none.

We hope to pursue criminal and civil actions against Dow Management, however to our understanding, the owner of Dow Management has fled to Asia. I hope this comment adds some context and clarity.

Thank you for your time. Please feel free to us at info@ewastecenter.com if you have any further questions.