

# “Greening” Electronics Purchasing at Veterans Affairs

The second largest of the 15 Federal Cabinet-level departments has decided to “green” its electronics purchasing process as part of the



FEC. Since signing the FEC MOU in

November 2004, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), which already takes an active role in ensuring the proper disposition of electronics, began exploring ways to integrate environmentally preferable attributes into its electronics acquisitions.

Among the VA’s acquisition and procurement goals under the FEC was to ensure that “green” contract language would be incorporated in the Procurement of Computer Hardware and Software (PCHS)-3 contract. The VA took a number of steps over the course of a year to advance this goal. For instance, representatives from the VA Office of Acquisition and Material Management and Office of Information and Technology worked closely with the FEC and the EPA on advancing EPEAT. While the VA continues to work on the PCHS-3 contract, the agency’s goal is to ensure that 100 percent of desktop and laptop computers and

monitors purchased by 2008 possess at least two environmental attributes described in EPEAT, in addition to the ENERGY STAR, label this equipment already carries.

Through the inclusion of green contract language, the VA is also hoping to encourage its electronics vendors to incorporate information about the environmental features of their products in existing training programs and materials. In addition, the use of EPEAT can help purchasers to more quickly identify energy efficient computer desktops, laptops, and monitors—all the more important

as Federal agencies heed the President’s call to reduce energy consumption in the wake of the damage done to the nation’s energy-producing infrastructure by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

As the VA notes, purchasing “green” electronics facilitates and improves the process for reuse or end-of-life disposition. Under a Memorandum of Understanding with UNICOR, VA shipped more than 1.4 million pounds of obsolete computers, monitors, and other office electronics to UNICOR for reuse or recycling in fiscal year 2004. VA also donates computers to schools as authorized by Executive Order 12999, both directly and through GSA’s Computers for Learning (CFL) Program. VA donations accomplished through the GSA CFL web site alone included 1,586 excess computers and peripherals, with an acquisition value of more than \$2 million.

Over the past year, the VA has produced Intranet Broadcast





***Since 2002, the Department of Veterans Affairs has been participating in America Recycles Day events that promote the recycling of unwanted and obsolete electronics. Pictured in front of a collection point for VA employees' personal, old electronic equipment are, from left to right: Freddie Martinez, Chris Matos, and Barbara Matos of the VA Office of Acquisition and Materiel Management.***

Announcements, internal newsletter articles, and electronic mail messages to raise employee awareness about the Department's participation in the FEC and the importance of environmentally sound electronics management. The VA also issued an FEC Policy Memorandum encouraging all VA administrations and facilities to join the FEC and take direct advantage of its educational and technical tools as well as its networking opportunities.

The VA continues to work to expand the reach, and improve the

effectiveness of, the FEC. For instance, VA headquarters representatives participated in a national conference call with the Veterans Health Administration's Green Environmental Management System (GEMS) Coordinators and introduced them to the FEC. Information was provided about the FEC EMS module, a tool that can help VA facilities ensure the effective integration of electronics management into their environmental management systems.

VA is planning to track its successes using the FEC's annual reporting form,

which VA representatives reviewed, tested, and commented. "VA takes pride in being a charter signatory to the MOU," noted Barbara Matos, the FEC coordinator at VA Central Office, who hopes to demonstrate the agency's improvements through the reporting form. "We are committed to managing our electronic assets in an environmentally sound and energy efficient manner throughout their life-cycle."

For further information, contact Barbara Matos at 202-273-6121 or [Barbara.Matos@va.gov](mailto:Barbara.Matos@va.gov). ■