

## Consumer electronics gets greener, calls for global standard

Green is in like never before at this year's Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, with companies touting the energy-saving, earth-friendly attributes of their gadgets. But the absence of an international standard makes it tough for consumers to decide which gadgets are greenest, reports Reuters.

On display are "eco-buttons" that reduce your computer's power consumption, e-lanterns that produce an hour's worth of light if you crank them for a minute, luminous TV screens that use far less energy than standard TVs and even mercury-free batteries that are 94 percent recyclable.

But in the absence of a uniform global standard that certifies a product as "green," are environment-conscious consumers buying more green hype than green engineering?

"Not necessarily," said **Jeff Omelchuck**, director of the Green Electronics Council, which provides an Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT) certification for computers.

The EPEAT provides manufacturers with a set of criteria against which to measure their products' environmental impact.

"Electronics are in fact much more environmentally friendly today than even five years ago," Omelchuck, an engineer, told Reuters.

"But that does not mean gadgets are "sustainable" -- leaving no adverse impact on the environment as they make their way from the factory to a recycling unit -- which would make them truly green," Omelchuck added.

"Companies are making products greener because the market expects them to," he added.

### **Must be green over the whole life cycle**

Environmental activists and analysts say any energy savings from a so-called green device will be offset if it uses highly toxic batteries or cannot be recycled.

Gadgets will be truly green when companies employ more eco-friendly manufacturing processes, packaging, design and recycling programs as part of a holistic approach to sustainability, they added.

"Consumers shouldn't have to choose between products that are incredibly green in one area, but grey in another," said **Casey Harrell**, a toxics campaigner for Greenpeace International.

On Friday, the pro-environment group held a news conference at CES to share highlights from a December green electronics survey.

Harrell said at the conference the electronics industry has taken "encouraging strides" toward improving green features on some gadgets in the past year.

But the absence of an international standard makes it tough for consumers to decide which gadgets are greenest.

The CES itself has gotten greener by reducing brochures and paper usage, and offering booths made of recyclable parts.

**Source: Energy & Enviro Finland, Weekly News, Week 2**