Green Electronics Daily

ENVIRONMENTAL BUSINESS, POLICY & TECHNOLOGY NEWS

Today's News:

CHEMICALS INFORMATION from supply chain remains challenge for global companies like HP seeking to green products, says study. HP compiling data on 240 chemicals not covered by regulations. (P. 1)

STATE ACTIVITIES: All interested parties given opportunity to speak at Oct. 13 TV spec hearing, says CEC spokesman. (P. 2)

INDUSTRY NOTES: 'Green' products that work with smart-grids likely next year, HomePlug Powerline Alliance says. (P. 2)

TRENDS: Green IT a priority for 70 percent of organizations, CompTIA study finds. (P. 3)

ENERGY EFFICIENCY: 1E releases energy monitoring tool for servers. (P. 3)

Hurdles to Information

HP Voluntarily Collecting Data from Supply Chain on 240 Chemicals

As market and regulatory trends drive manufactures to eliminate or reduce toxic substances in products, many of the companies with large, complex global supply chains face challenges in getting from suppliers the information about chemicals they need to green their products, a study found. The Green Chemistry & Commerce Council, a project of the Lowell Center for Sustainable Production, had ordered studies of how Hewlett Packard, Nike and S.C. Johnson gather chemical information from their supply chains and how they use the data to develop safer and environmentally friendly products. The work was done by Monica Becker & Associates and the results released this month.

Green consumerism, green certification programs, consumer demand for more information of chemicals used in products and regulations such those in California and Europe's RoHS and REACH are compelling companies to cut back or eliminate harmful chemicals in products, the study said. With supply chains becoming "deeper, branched and global," manufacturers face challenges in getting chemical information they need for their green design programs, it said.

Some suppliers may not have the information that companies need because those they source the chemicals from can't or won't provide information, the study said. They also may not have the capability or infrastructure to develop the information. Other suppliers may be reluctant to provide chemical information for fear of losing sales or customers and some may not be forthcoming because they don't want to give out proprietary information or because of fear of potential liability, the study said.

HP's General Specification for the Environment includes a list of restricted materials, requirements for packaging and requirements for products subjected to RoHS. The specifications apply to all HP-brand products including subassemblies, parts, materials components, batteries and packaging, the study said. Aimed at reducing

the environmental impact of its products, HP's Design for Environment program has energy efficiency, materials innovation and design for recycling as main components, it said. The company also takes part in EPEAT.

Besides getting information from supplies to meet RoHS and REACH requirements, HP gets information on 240 additional chemicals as "voluntary reporting," the study found. The list includes carcinogens, mutagens, reproductive toxins, persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic chemicals and endocrine disruptors that HP determined as possibly used in electronic products, it said. The company is building a database on where these chemicals occur in the supply chain. "This will facilitate future efforts by HP to restrict those chemicals, either because of new regulation or a corporate decision, and to work with suppliers to find safer substitutes," the study said.

HP has found that getting chemical information from suppliers remains difficult because of language and cultural barriers, supply chain complexities and unclear requirements for information under regulatory or green procurement programs, the study found. The company developed an internal "easy-to-use Web-based portal" for chemical data entry. HP finds that the patchwork of global regulations is inefficient and "detracts from more proactive design for environment activities," it said. "Harmonization of regulations would allow this global company to more efficiently track and conduct regulatory compliance programs, freeing up resources to advance green chemistry and design for environment activities," the study said. -- *Dinesh Kumar*

State Activities

The California Energy Commission "provided an opportunity for all interested parties to be heard on the record" at its Oct. 13 public hearing on proposed regulations to limit energy use of TVs, a commission spokesman said. He was responding to criticism by CE industry executives that speakers who support the regulations got preference over opponents at the hearing (GED Oct 19 p1). "We had a packed room and everyone who wanted to comment got their fair chance to talk," the spokesman said. He said representatives of the CEA, the Custom Electronic Design & Installation Association, Panasonic, JVC and other industry bodies spoke at the hearing. Panasonic was outspoken about the CEC's proposed regulations. It's among several TV makers that are drafting a letter of protest to the commission, joining LG, JVC, Philips, Samsung, Sharp and Toshiba. "We're very concerned about the proposed CEC regulations on power, brightness and some other technical operations of HDTVs, because over time they will deprive consumers of real choice in performance and quality of their HDTVs, and perhaps even size," said Peter Fannon, Panasonic vice president for corporate and government affairs. "Such government mandates on TV design elements can undercut practical innovations in new products, features, and even energy efficiency itself. This is because the first iteration of any complex product is never the best. In the case of HDTVs, their early success in the market encouraged more R&D, so that today's flat-panel HDTVs use less than half the power of the larger size 27- to 36-inch tube TVs of the past. That is, today's typical flat panel HDTVs use no more power than a typical room light bulb or two, even with much larger screens offering at least six times the picture quality." The CEC's proposed regulations could stifle industry investment in TV energy conservation and other features, instead of stimulating them as the commission claims, he said. "Apparently, the CEC doesn't trust consumers to know or care about energy consumption," Fannon said. "TV manufacturers do trust consumers, and we know that energy awareness is increasing all the time. Indeed, the recent experience of Californians means they may well know more and care more than any." He repeated the theme of all CE makers that government, manufacturers and retailers "together can better spend everyone's limited time and money on helping educate consumers about smart energy choices in all their electronics purchasing and use decisions." To that end, "we would urge the CEC to collect TV power data annually, model by model, maker by maker, and make it part of such an ongoing public awareness effort," Fannon said. -- *DK, SAB*

Industry Notes

Consumer products that comply with the needs of smart-grid operators could arrive next year, following the approval of a final draft for the IEEE 1901 standard, the HomePlug Powerline Alliance said on Monday. The IEEE

spec for consumer devices was developed in cooperation with energy providers and smart-grid operators to meet their requirements, and is the only powerline communications standard that addresses those needs, the Alliance said. Final approval for the standard is expected at the IEEE working group's December meeting in Tel Aviv. It's expected to include a "green" logo that identifies qualifying HomePlug products, the Alliance said.

Trends

Green IT is a mid- to high-level priority for about 70 percent of organizations, but they're finding it hard to show "return on investment" on green initiatives, a Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA) study found. "Some green IT purchases have longer payback periods," said Tim Herbert, CompTIA vice president of research. "But the survey data suggests many organizations are willing to invest in greener IT products even when the return isn't realized immediately." The study found that 60 percent of the organizations had some form of green IT strategy in place, covering energy use, equipment usage, recycling and carbon footprint. More than 70 percent conduct ad hoc or annual audits to ensure proper e-waste recycling and disposal practices and nearly as many conduct audits to assess their energy use and power management, the study said. Hurdles in going green included implementation costs, lack of resources and difficulty in computing the return on investment of green projects, it said. About 20 percent of organizations have budget allocations for green IT initiatives, it said. "Regulatory compliance issues and positive publicity may be driving interest in environmentally friendly IT products and services," Herbert said.

Energy Efficiency

1E released a NightWatchman power management edition for servers. The tool is aimed at $24.7 billion of IT energy wasted each year on servers while they aren't doing useful work, the company said. Previous monitoring tools deal mainly with performance and give little insight into whether a server is providing business value, it said. NightWatchman provides detailed efficiency and power reporting so decisions such as about decommissioning wasteful servers become much simpler, 1E said. With productive servers, energy savings can be enhanced using the tool, it said.