



November 6, 2008

**SCOTT PELLEY AND CREW GET ROUGHED UP  
GETTING THE STORY OF TOXIC “E-WASTE” DUMPS  
IN CHINA – “60 MINUTES” SUNDAY ON CBS**

**60 MINUTES Follows the Trail of Electronic Waste Shipped Illegally from the U.S.**

When Scott Pelley and his crew went to China to record the black market dismantling of electronic waste, or “e-waste,” the experience was almost as hazardous for the 60 MINUTES team as working with the toxic material is for poor Chinese workers. Jumped by a gang of men overseeing the e-waste operations who tried to take the CBS team’s cameras, Pelley’s crew managed to escape and bring back footage of the hazardous activities. Pelley’s investigation will be broadcast on 60 MINUTES Sunday, Nov. 9 (7:00-8:00 PM, ET/PT) on the CBS Television Network. Click here <http://cts.vresp.com/c/?BaselActionNetwork/fe3c3364ef/53ec312228/fe87d77e49/id=4578874n> to watch an excerpt.

The Chinese attackers were trying to protect a lucrative business of mining the e-waste-junked computers, televisions and other old electronic products for valuable components, including gold. “They’re afraid of being found out. This is smuggling. This is illegal,” says Jim Puckett, founder of the Basel Action Network, a group working to stop the dumping of toxic materials in poor countries that certifies ethical e-waste recyclers in the United States. “A lot of people are turning a blind eye here. And if somebody makes enough noise, they’re afraid this is all going to dry up.”

E-waste workers in Guiyu, China, where Pelley’s team videotaped, put up with the dangerous conditions for the \$8 a day the job pays. They use caustic chemicals and burn the plastic parts to get at the valuable components, often releasing toxins that they not only inhale, but release into the air, the ground and the water. Potable water must now be trucked into Guiyu and scientists have discovered that the city has the highest levels of cancer-causing dioxins in the world. Pregnancies in Guiyu are six times more likely to result in miscarriages, and seven out of 10 children there have too much lead in their blood.

Allen Hershkowitz, a senior scientist with the Natural Resources Defense Council, outlines the e-waste pollutants and their effects. “Lead, cadmium, mercury, chromium, and polyvinyl chloride, all of these materials have known toxicological effects that range from brain damage, kidney disease, to mutations, cancers,” he tells Pelley. And there’s no shortage of refuse that contains these hazardous materials. “We throw out about 130,000 computers every day in the United States...we throw out over 100 million cell phones every year,” says Hershkowitz.

A great deal of this American e-waste winds up in places like Guiyu. In fact, even some companies promising to recycle it safely will illegally export it, as 60 MINUTES reveals. While visiting a Colorado recycling operation, 60 MINUTES videotaped and noted the serial number of a container full of cathode ray tube (CRT) monitors, generally illegal to export because of high lead content. The container was then shipped to Hong Kong, where local law prohibits the import of toxic e-waste.

When Pelley confronted him with evidence of the export, the owner of the Colorado recycling company denied filling the shipping container found on his lot and says his company would not sell scrap CRT monitors or television screens overseas. But 60 MINUTES learned that the company, and 42 other American firms just like it, were recently caught in a government sting. They all offered to break the law by selling such e-waste when solicited by a federal agent posing as a foreign importer.

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