



# Electronics Stewardship

*“Greening” the U.S. Coast Guard computer lifecycle.*

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Like any other federal agency, the U.S. Coast Guard relies on an extensive network of computers to support all of its missions. This network of more than 40,000 computers allows the Coast Guard to enhance maritime safety, maritime security, national defense, maritime mobility, and the preservation of natural resources. Managing these computers in an environmentally sound manner is an important goal of the U.S. Coast Guard’s information technology (IT) community.

In order to ensure the most cost-effective and environmentally sound management of computer resources, we take steps to “green” the entire lifecycle of U.S.

Coast Guard computer resources. This lifecycle includes the procurement, operation, and disposition of all computers.

## **Environmentally Responsible IT Procurement**

In procuring computer resources, the U.S. Coast Guard not only looks for the best value and performance in equipment; it also uses available federal resources to ensure its computers are environmentally friendly. An important tool used to procure computers is the electronic product environmental assessment tool™ (EPEAT). This tool was sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency and developed by a team comprised of industry experts.

EPEAT is an evaluation tool that allows purchasers to compare electronic products based on environmental attributes, including reduction and elimination of environmentally sensitive materials, design for end of life, lifecycle extension, energy conservation, and packaging. All computers that are provided to the U.S. Coast Guard on its current computer contract are EPEAT-registered, and any future contracts will continue to require EPEAT-registered products.<sup>1</sup>

## **Environmentally Friendly Operations**

Not only does the U.S. Coast Guard seek to minimize the environmental impact of its computer resources in procurement, but it also takes steps to operate its systems in a manner



**Gakona Public School in Valdez, Alaska, was the recipient of 23 used computers courtesy of the local Coast Guard Marine Safety Office. USCG photo.**

that is safe for the environment. One important aspect of environmentally friendly computer operation is to conserve as much energy as practicable. The Coast Guard uses computers that are Energy Star®-qualified. Energy Star® establishes efficiency requirements for all modes of a computer's operation, which enhances energy savings. Qualifying computers include an internal power supply that is at least 80 percent energy-efficient.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to conserving energy during the operation of its computer resources, the U.S. Coast Guard also maximizes the lifetime of these resources. We currently purchase a five-year warranty with all Coast Guard standard workstations. A longer computer lifetime

the U.S. Coast Guard can donate used computers to a variety of educational institutions throughout the country. Finally, if the systems are not suitable for donation to either schools or other federal offices, the U.S. Coast Guard transfers the equipment to local defense reutilization marketing offices, where the equipment is sold, donated, or disposed of in accordance with federal environmental regulations.

#### **A Greener Lifecycle**

By managing all elements of the computer lifecycle with an emphasis on environmental protection, the U.S. Coast Guard not only enhances its dedication to the environment, but also saves money by conserving energy and limiting turnover in its computer inventory. Be-



**Coast Guard watchstanders in the First District command center. All Coast Guard missions rely on computer support. USCG photo.**

leads to decreased waste production and saves money by decreasing the demand for new hardware.

#### **Environmentally Aware Disposal**

After a computer has reached the end of its useful life, we take several important steps to ensure that all computers are disposed of in an environmentally friendly manner. One way is to transfer the equipment to other federal agencies that might be able to put the equipment to use.

Yet another option for computer disposal is to donate the computers to a learning program. Using this option,

cause of this careful lifecycle management, the U.S. Coast Guard can take its environmental protection mission from the nation's coasts and waterways to its offices around the nation and the world.

#### **About the author:**

*LCDR Amy Bloyd has served in the U.S. Coast Guard for 11 years. A 1997 U.S. Coast Guard Academy graduate, she has served as a deck watch officer aboard a high-endurance cutter, a strategic intelligence analyst for the U.S. Coast Guard intelligence coordination center, and the deputy group commander of USCG Group Lower Mississippi River in Memphis, Tenn.*

#### **Endnotes:**

- <sup>1</sup> Office of the Federal Environmental Executive, "Answers to Frequent Questions: EPEAT and the FEC."
- <sup>2</sup> Green Electronics Council, "EPEAT Ratchets Up."

