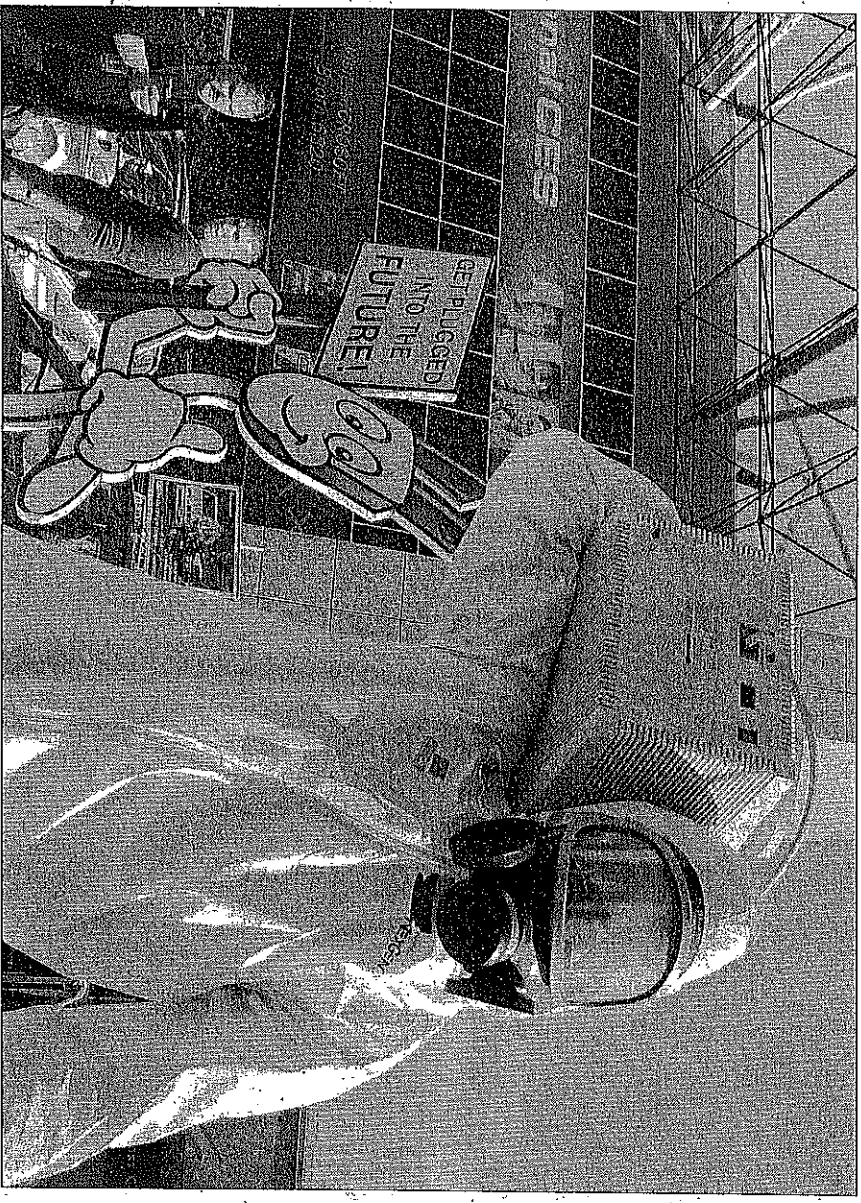


'E-waste' efforts graded



JOE GAVARETTA — ASSOCIATED PRESS

Protester Dillon Roberts carries a used PC monitor Thursday outside the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

TOXICS STUDY FAULTS DELL, HP, MICRON, GATEWAY

Associated Press

Hewlett-Packard, Micron Technology and Gateway received poor or failing grades on reducing hazardous materials in electronics and encouraging recycling, according to a report published Thursday.

The study, published online after research by the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, accuses U.S. companies of being slow to reduce "e-waste," including lead, polyvinyl chloride and other hazardous materials used in computer manufacturing.

The report was especially hard on Dell Computer for failing to send company representatives to shareholder meetings involving toxic materials policy. It also attacked the nation's top-selling computer manufacturer for dealing with a U.S. government contractor, Unicom, which employs prison inmates to recycle outdated computers.

According to the Computer Take-Back Campaign, "high-tech chain gangs" are not guaranteed the safety protections needed to ensure protection against e-waste.

Activists mocked Dell's use of inmate labor at a protest Thursday in Las Vegas, where company execu-

tives gathered for the Consumer Electronics Show.

Dell spokeswoman Michele Glaze defended the contract with Unicom, which is paid by dozens of companies and government agencies to have federal inmates recycle electronics, wash laundry, make toner cartridges, stamp metal and perform other jobs.

Activists mocked Dell's use of inmate labor at a protest in Las Vegas, where company executives gathered for the Consumer Electronics Show.

Glaze said the lower wages earned by inmates allows Dell to recycle computers inexpensively. Owners of obsolete Dell machines pay shipping costs to return their computers but do not have to pay any additional costs.

"We are as concerned about this issue as the Computer Take-Back Campaign is," Glaze said. "We don't want people to throw away their computers."

Dell's failing grade mirrors lax environmental standards throughout the country, according to the

computer take-back group.

Even the highest-ranking American company in the study, IBM, "disappointed" researchers for selling American consumers computers containing brominated flame retardants, used to prevent fires in circuit boards. Some countries prohibit the flame retardants, which are suspected of blocking hormones and impairing some biological processes. In those countries, IBM ships machines free of the chemicals.

The National Safety Council estimates the United States will be awash in 500 million defunct computers and monitors by 2007.

Only a handful of U.S. computer makers, including HP, Dell and IBM, take back old computer equipment for disposal with little or no cost to consumers. Thursday's report said less than 10 percent of outdated computer products will be refurbished or recycled.

Japan, home of the highest-ranking electronics manufacturers, Fujitsu and Canon, passed a law in 2001 requiring manufacturers to recycle certain parts. Japan also requires disclosure of chemical use in production plants.