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DISPLAYS: Two-year-old startup Pixel Qi wins silver in SID's display of the year contest for its power-efficient 3Qi Multimode LCD. (P. 2)

E-WASTE: Software products supplier Codima starts new e-waste subsidiary that will offer full recycling services. (P. 2)

'Supply Star' Program

Senate Bill Seeks to Improve Energy Efficiency in Supply Chain Operations

A bipartisan Senate bill targeting energy efficiency in the supply chain of all businesses would provide companies with financing, technical support and training to improve their supply chain efficiency. The Supply Star Act would build on the Department of Energy's Energy Star program and "best practices in industry and research communities to give companies access to resources needed to maximize supply chain efficiency."

The bill was introduced late Monday by Sens. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Scott Brown, R-Mass., Blanche Lincoln, D-Ark., and Mark Pryor, D-Ark. It would set up a "Supply Star" program within the DOE's Energy Star program and promote, as "preferred," companies and products that comply with the program's rules. The DOE would be required to collect and disseminate data on supply chain energy use and develop guidance at the sector level for improving supply chain efficiency.

The energy secretary can award grants or other incentives for studying supply chain energy efficiency and for "demonstrating and achieving reductions" in energy use of commercial products through "changes and improvements to the production supply and distribution supply chain of the products." The department will work with domestic and international organizations to harmonize methods to analyze supply chain efficiency and to develop a "consistent set of tools, templates, calculators and databases."

Companies are facing pressure from customers, stockholders and regulators to improve their energy performance, said Bingaman. "Since up to 90 percent of a company's energy use can come from its supply chains, a program like Supply Star makes perfect sense." Energy Star has been effective because it's a "straightforward" program, and adding more programs would add to consumer confusion, said a CE executive: "With Energy Star, Super Star, Home Star and now Supply Star there is the potential for a constellation of consumer confusion," he said. — *Dinesh Kumar*

Companies

Best Buy joined the EPA's Responsible Appliance Disposal program to promote "environmentally responsible" disposal of household appliances, the company said. As a collector, Best Buy will also help proper disposal of other appliance waste streams such as polychlorinated biphenyls and mercury switches, it said. The company recently set a goal to collect 1 billion pounds of used electronics and appliances for recycling.

Displays

Two-year-old startup Pixel Qi won silver honors for display of the year at the Society for Information Display conference in Seattle, conference organizers said Tuesday. Like standard-backlit active-matrix LCD displays, the 3Qi Multimode LCD from Pixel Qi renders quality full-color images, full-motion video, and high screen luminance, they said. "However, in environments with high ambient light levels, the 3Qi's reflective mode contributes to the rendered image, allowing the backlight to be turned down or off. This unique capability delivers significant power savings, an attractive screen and a comfortable reading experience, with very high resolution." Outdoors is where the 3Qi display's "transflective 2.0" technology best comes into play, they said. "Each pixel is mainly reflective, but has about the same transmissive efficiency as a standard LCD, enabling the user to experience a crisp image with excellent contrast and brightness in any light. This highly 'green' LCD consumes 80 percent less power in reflective mode, yet delivers a contrast ratio of 10:1 and a hemispheric reflectance approaching 30 percent — typical of the best electrophoretic displays."

Energy Efficiency

Utilities' smart grid operations' success relies a great deal on support from the telecom industry and coordination between the two sectors, said Jesse Hurley, chairman of the critical infrastructure committee of the North American Energy Standards Board. Because of the business opportunities, telecom providers have a strong incentive to build out networks for smart grid, he said on a Webinar hosted by USTelecom. Smart grid has thrown up a lot of "regulatory questions" about who owns consumer data, privacy and other legal issues, he said. It has introduced legal, hardware, software and operational issues that haven't been addressed fully, he said. Also, costs of smart grid buildouts could exceed projections, potentially slowing their rollout, he said. Service providers would have to "demonstrate reliability and resiliency levels that will support continuity of utility operations" during emergency situations, said Robert Mayer, USTelecom vice president of industry and state affairs. Utility efforts to minimize cybersecurity vulnerabilities could delay smart grid implementation or "derail" deployment for years, he said. Problems with implementation of smart grid services, especially smart meters, could result in consumer "resistance" to utility smart grid offerings, he said.

GridPoint said it received a contract to install energy management systems in selected post offices in the U.S. The contract follows a pilot program in 16 postal locations aimed at cutting energy use with GridPoint's advanced monitoring and control systems, the company said.

E-Waste

Codima, a supplier of integrated network management software products, formed a new e-waste subsidiary called Codima Green, the company said Tuesday. Codima Green will offer "full recycling services for the growing

pile of end-of-life telecom equipment and other e-waste to new commercial clients and existing customers in North America," the company said. Codima Green will offer e-waste pickup and recycling services and is "expected to contribute significantly to revenue growth through the capture of precious metals refining," it said. "We project that our clients have millions of dollars of electronic scrap and e-waste and Codima Green offers an opportunity to them to dispose of their e-waste cost effectively and safely," said Codima CEO Christer Mattsson.

Green Notes

IT products distributor Tech Data Corp. said it started a new website — techdata.com — that, in addition to helping resellers conduct business more efficiently, enables EPEAT-rated green product search.

Trends

With smart grid pilots and demonstration programs underway in 33 U.S. states, the utility industry faces challenges of managing costs and alliances with tech and auto industries, according to a PricewaterhouseCoopers report. More than 60 percent of utilities cited smart grid initiatives such as advanced metering as reasons for increasing capital expenditure in 2010, the report said. They also raised concerns about layering smart grid capital expenditures on top of already-expanding capital expenditure budgets in areas such as communications systems and smart meter installation and maintenance, it said. Other issues that utilities will confront as they move forward with smart grid plans include cyber security, managing data from millions of smart meters, and dealing with new partners in the smart grid space, the report said.



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