



THE MYSTERY SHOPPER'S DAY

Hi, I am Ms Terry Shopper. I'm employed by VCA who are the Enforcement Agency for the Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations relating to the supply of WEEE to Householders. My role is to shop. It is not the kind of shopping I normally like to do, I'm shopping for information.

My primary function is to test stores who provide/sell Electrical & Electronic Equipment (EEE) to the every day consumer. On 1 July 2007 the WEEE Regulations came fully into force and that meant that stores either offer free in-store take-back or have joined a scheme (The Distributor Take-Back Scheme (DTS)). In basic terms, if they are members of the scheme they do not have to take back WEEE in store but should advise the consumer where to dispose of such equipment responsibly i.e. a recycling centre. All stores should be aware of the WEEE regulations and should be able to advise the consumer of the requirements of Regulation 33 that is to advise whether they take back; the nearest recycling centre or how to find it; the impact on the environment regarding WEEE and the meaning of the Crossed Out Wheelie Bin.

I visit a town or city and work my way from store to store. I browse the goods in question like any shopper would do but initially I am looking to see whether electrical goods have been with the crossed out wheeled bin. Having done that I approach a member of staff – it could be a shop floor assistant or even a Manager, it doesn't matter to me as all personnel should be trained. I ask, for example, if they will take back my old vacuum cleaner. The answers I have received have been anything from a blank look to a straight "no, we don't" with no further explanation. I inform them (giving them a second chance) I have read about the WEEE Regulations on the internet and explain what the acronym stands for but this doesn't help much either. On some occasions I have been told to "just put it in the bin with my normal household rubbish" or "I don't care about regulations, there are too many of them" and even "those regulations aren't in force yet, only in Ireland".

At the end of my shopping day and often feeling pretty frustrated at some of the answers I've received, I write my report for submission to VCA, who will then make their decision on the next course of action. I then look forward to my next shopping day and what it may have in store for me! You won't know who I am until its too late. You'll know when you get a visit from the Enforcement Officer, that you've been hit by the Mystery Shopper.

Please email us if you would like further information – weee@vca.gov.uk