

Electronic Waste Disposal



What is electronic waste?

Electronic waste is composed of all of the electronics people throw out each year when they become broken or obsolete. Electronic wastes include: televisions, computers, printers, fax machines, scanners, computer mice, keyboards, cell phones, etc..

Why is it a problem?

Electronic products are the fastest growing portion of the solid waste stream in the United States. Because electronics are being developed so rapidly, the amount of electronic waste increases each year. About 2 million tons of electronic waste were discarded in 2005, and between 80-85% of that ended up in a landfill. Electronics take up a lot of valuable space in the landfill because they are not easily compactable.

What happens to the electronics that I drop off?

Cell phones are often donated to charity, or may be recycled to recover metals like gold, silver, copper, and palladium. Other devices like computers, monitors, and televisions can also be recycled so that the reusable materials can be recovered. When these materials can be obtained through recycling, less mining has to be done, so fuel use and environmental disturbance can both decrease.

What can I do to make sure my personal information is safe?

You will want to remove any private information stored on your device's memory. To recycle your cell phone, terminate your service, clear the phone's memory (manually or with programs that can be found on the Internet), and destroy your phone's SIM card. If you decide to donate your computer or PDA, do not rely on manually deleting your files. A software store can help you find the right tools to protect your information.

What should I do with my electronic waste?

Homeowners can bring them to one of the two Household Hazardous Waste Facilities, where your items will be disposed of for free. These are located at:

- 6030 W. California Ave.
- 10873 S. 7200 W.

They are open from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Business electronic waste will not be accepted. Another option is to donate e-waste to charities that can re-use them.

What makes the waste toxic and what are the health effects?

In order to work properly, electronic devices contain materials that are not biodegradable and are potentially very toxic to humans and the environment.

- **Lead** is a major component of interconnects, solders, and cathode ray tubes (CRTs) in both TVs and PCs. Old CRTs might contain as much as 4 pounds of lead. Chronic overexposure to lead can lead to central nervous system (CNS) damage, severe kidney disease, reproductive impairment, and decreased hemoglobin leading to anemia.
- **Mercury** is often used to light up computer monitors or notebooks. It is dangerous to a developing fetus and can cause permanent damage to the kidneys and CNS.
- **Brominated** flame retardants were widely used in older plastic cables. These chemicals are potentially toxic to the liver, thyroid, and to neurodevelopment.
- **Cadmium** used to be a common component of rechargeable batteries for portable electronic devices, like laptop computers. Chronic effects resulting from cadmium exposure include kidney damage, lung cancer, prostate cancer, pulmonary emphysema, bone disease, anemia, teeth discoloration, and loss of smell.



For more information, contact:

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