

E-waste: A growing problem

Electronic waste, or e-waste, consists of unwanted, obsolete, or unusable electronic products such as computers and computer peripherals, televisions, VCRs, DVD players, stereo equipment, and cell phones. Managing and disposing of e-waste has become a serious problem among states nationwide, including Idaho. Why?

It's taking up valuable landfill space.

The volume of e-waste is growing rapidly as technology advances. According to some research, e-waste is growing at three times the rate of other municipal waste.



It can contain hazardous materials.

If disposed of in landfills, e-waste could leach heavy metals into ground water. This threat is a serious one for Idaho, where 90% of our drinking water comes from ground water.

Of particular concern is lead in e-waste. Lead is a toxic substance that may cause lead poisoning and can be especially harmful to young children. A typical 17-inch computer monitor contains approximately 2.2 pounds of lead. The 500 million computers that became obsolete between 1997 and 2007 contained nearly 1.6 billion pounds of lead.

For more information

Idaho Department of Environmental Quality

State Office
1410 N. Hilton
Boise, ID 83706
(208) 373-0502

Idaho Department of Environmental Quality

DEQ provides information on household hazardous waste and pollution prevention and can offer regulatory and technical assistance. Visit our website at www.deq.idaho.gov.

US Environmental Protection Agency

EPA offers information on household hazardous waste, waste disposal, and recycling. For more information about computers and their impact on our landfills, visit www.epa.gov.

Electronics Recycling Programs

Most computer manufacturers provide information about their computer recycling programs on their websites, or you can call their toll-free numbers for more details.

Some large retail stores accept used electronic equipment when consumers purchase new equipment. Ask the sales person if the store will accept used electronic equipment.

Look in your local phone book for waste management companies in your area. These companies may offer electronics recycling. And watch for special computer recycling events sponsored occasionally by office supply and electronics stores.



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E-Waste Recycling



Disposing of Your Old Electronic Products



**Idaho Department of
Environmental Quality**
www.deq.idaho.gov



What should I do with my old electronics?

E-waste can be managed in various ways, depending on its continued usability, availability of reprocessing facilities, where it is generated, and other factors.

Upgrade

In many cases, additional memory or a new monitor or part can improve your computer's performance and extend its usefulness.

Donate

Many charities, schools, and other organizations need equipment. A computer that is two years old could be new to a charity. However, many charities lack the resources to fix or upgrade computers or don't have the storage space for unusable items. Always call first to inquire about minimum requirements for electronic equipment donations.



Sell

Are there shops in your town that specialize in computer or cell phone rebuilds and upgrades? Do they sell used electronics? These companies may be interested in purchasing or taking donated items that they will rebuild and resell or salvage for parts. These same companies may be able to help you upgrade or repair your existing equipment.

Recycle

Several national and regional programs recycle used electronics and accessories. The metals, plastics, and other parts of the system are often valuable and can be salvaged for reuse. Trained professionals can recycle components and recover valuable products.

Most major electronics manufacturers and many waste management companies offer some type of recycling program, and consumers should determine which program best fits their needs.

For a nominal charge, these programs will provide pick-up from home or office or pay for shipping costs, then donate working components to charity or recycle unusable parts.



Did You Know . . .

- An estimated 133,000 computers become obsolete each day.
- Computer components contain lead, mercury, cadmium, chromium, and other hazardous materials that should not be disposed of in a landfill.
- The glass screens or cathode ray tubes (CRTs) in older monitors and televisions can contain as much as 27% lead.
- 100 million pounds of materials are recovered each year by electronic recyclers.
- In 2009, 2.37 million tons of electronics were ready for end-of-life management.

Recycling offers many benefits:

- ✓ Conserves limited landfill space and holds down landfill costs by keeping bulky items out of landfills.
- ✓ Protects the water, land, and air by keeping hazardous materials out of landfills.
- ✓ Provides social benefits by donating used equipment to charitable organizations.
- ✓ Conserves natural resources by reusing the plastics, metals, and other parts from old electronics.

Dispose

As a last resort, you may be able to dispose of old equipment in local landfills, with permission from the landfill. Many communities have household hazardous waste programs to handle potentially hazardous products separately from normal trash. Contact your waste management company, city, or local landfill operator for safe disposal information.

