



Fact Sheet

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania • Department of Environmental Protection

RECYCLING OF COMPUTERS, COMPUTER MONITORS AND TELEVISIONS

Because of technological advances that have turned every household into an electronic haven, many people are asking how they can recycle or properly dispose of their old or unusable computers.

Many consumer electronic products contain heavy metals such as lead, cadmium and mercury that are better kept out of the environment. In fact, the typical computer monitor contains four to seven pounds of lead. Televisions, depending on their size, may contain even more lead.

The state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) urges citizens to know the facts and take steps now to "reduce, reuse and recycle" computers and other monitors, rather than discard them.

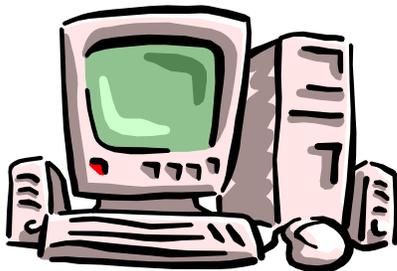
In the case of computers, DEP strongly recommends that residents:

Reduce the need to purchase a replacement computer by buying one with ample capacity for upgrades, selecting one that offers a buy-back option, or leasing instead of buying.

Reuse a computer, for example, by giving it as a gift for a student graduation or other occasion, by selling it through the want-ads or by donating it to a school or a nonprofit organization.

Recycle a computer by taking it to an electronics recycler, who will disassemble it for parts and/or to glean precious metals from it.

If you must discard a computer, DEP urges you to check with your municipality or county recycling coordinator to find out about local options for proper disposal. For a list of county recycling coordinators, visit DEP's website at www.dep.state.pa.us (Keyword: "DEP recycling").



Here are the answers to some commonly asked questions regarding computers:

Why can't I just put my computer out with the trash?

DEP regulations do not prohibit households from setting a computer out with regular household trash. But, DEP urges you to do your part for the environment by trying to give your computer a longer life or by having it properly recycled.

Why all this fuss over computers and televisions?

Our society is changing. When TV was first invented, only some households had television sets. Today, just about every home has at least one television and a large number of homes have a computer. Televisions, like computer monitors, contain cathode-ray tubes (CRTs) that contain lead and should be kept out of landfills.

The National Safety Council (NSC) reports that the average life span of a computer purchased in 1997 was 3.4 years, but for one bought in 2000, it is 2.8 years. The rising turnover rate of computers has raised the question of how to properly manage equipment you are no longer using.

A study done in Florida indicated that the largest source of lead in our municipal solid waste is from discarded CRTs. Therefore, it is important to keep CRTs and other electronics out of landfills.

Who would want my used computer? It's an old model and it doesn't have many programs.

Remember, "One person's junk is another person's treasure." Because of the advent of computers, most businesses and even high school students don't use typewriters anymore. A friend, your children, a nonprofit organization or a school might appreciate having your old computer, even if just for word-processing.

Can I sell my computer for the parts? What businesses take computers?

Most electronics businesses will not pay you for your old computer, because it costs them money to retrieve the computer's parts and precious metals. The NSC maintains a list of these businesses on its

website, www.nsc.org (choose Environment, Solid Waste, Electronic Product Recovery and Recycling).

I don't want computers to end up in our landfills. What can I do to help?

Encourage your friends to join you in upgrading their computers when possible or in having their old computers properly recycled. Become aware of those around you who could benefit from the donation of a computer. Ask your municipality to consider sponsoring an annual or semi-annual collection of household hazardous waste (HHW).

DEP offers grants of up to 50 percent of the developmental and operational costs associated with an HHW collection.

Where can I get more information?

Call DEP's toll-free HHW hot line at 800-346-4242 or DEP's Division of Waste Minimization and Planning at 717-787-7382. For more information, visit DEP's website at www.state.pa.us, Keyword: "DEP electronic discards" or "DEP HHW").

DEP Regional Offices

<p>Northcentral Region</p> <p>208 W. Third Street, Suite 101 Williamsport, PA 17701-6448 570-327-3636</p> <p>Counties: <i>Bradford, Cameron, Clearfield, Centre, Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Sullivan, Tioga and Union</i></p>	<p>Southcentral Region</p> <p>909 Elmerton Avenue Harrisburg, PA 17110-8200 717-705-4700</p> <p>Counties: <i>Adams, Bedford, Berks, Blair, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry and York</i></p>
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<p>Northwest Region</p> <p>230 Chestnut St. Meadville, PA 16335-3481 814-332-6945</p> <p>Counties: <i>Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Venango and Warren</i></p>	<p>Southwest Region</p> <p>400 Waterfront Drive Pittsburgh, PA 15222-4745 412-442-4000</p> <p>Counties: <i>Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington and Westmoreland</i></p>