



# The Harmful Effects of E-Waste to Humans

Jane Marsh - October 9, 2021

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There's a lot of waste that ends up in landfills throughout the globe. This waste has caused harmful effects on environmental and human health. To mitigate those issues, households recycle their waste or compost food scraps. It's a simple way to help both their health and the planet.

Still, a majority of the human waste we produce ends up in landfills regardless of the efforts some people make to keep it out of landfills. One of the products that you may not think of going to landfills is electronic waste, also known as e-waste.

The problem with e-waste has grown significantly over the past decade. Electronics are everywhere. People use electronic devices nearly every day. When those devices reach the end of their lives, it's up to the owner what happens with them. Some people may choose to stash the device in an attic. Others may throw it away in their usual garbage disposal.

Either way, it's a growing problem that needs to be further addressed. There are many harmful effects of e-waste to humans and the environment.

### What Is E-Waste?

E-waste, or electronic waste, e-scrap or end-of-life electronics, are terms that [describe any used electronic device](#) that is at the end or is nearing the end of its purposeful life. Some of those electronics include televisions, cell phones, computers, stereos, microwaves, fans, smart lights, power strips and other devices. These are then discarded, recycled or donated.

Although these are waste items, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines e-waste as a subset of used electronics. They also see the value of those materials to be [reused or recycled to minimize waste](#).

Unfortunately, many of these electronics are shipped from the United States to other developing countries for them to handle. However, they don't have the proper equipment to handle electronics adequately and therefore, use improper practices. That then results in both environmental concerns and human health issues.

Below are just some of the harmful effects of e-waste on human health.

#### 1. Exposure to Harmful Substances

Every year, over [50 million metric tons](#) of e-waste are produced throughout the world. As previously stated, much of that electronic waste ends up in developing countries where people don't have access to the proper equipment to handle it. Workers take whatever measures possible to get rid of that waste, including burning or recovering valuable materials that are still useful, like copper and gold.

This exposes those people to harmful substances. Many electronics contain toxic materials like nickel, zinc, lead, chromium, barium and flame retardants. These can all cause damage to the human body. Lead may get into the blood, kidneys and even the nervous system.

#### 2. Affects Development of Unborn Children

Some of the workers in developing countries handling that waste are women who are expecting a child. When a pregnant woman is exposed to those harmful substances, it can affect the development and health of her unborn child both in and out of the womb.

Adverse [health effects to the child](#) include stillbirth, premature birth and low birth weight. Further, any exposure the woman has to lead could reduce neonatal behavioral scores, an increased risk of mental health disorders, behavioral problems and reduced cognitive abilities. It can also affect a child's lung function, respiratory system and chronic diseases later in their lives.

#### 3. Leads to Air and Water Pollution

Another way e-waste affects humans is through air pollution. Often, the electronics that are sent away to other countries end up in the incinerator. This process releases harmful chemicals and pollutants into the air. Humans rely on air to breathe, so when that air fills with toxins, it can affect a person's respiratory system.

Just as those chemicals get into the air, they also enter the water. The toxins from electronics enter the groundwater, which is what feeds into streams, ponds and lakes. Humans rely on these freshwater sources, and if they ingest it, it could lead to serious health problems.



How to Properly Dispose of Your E-Waste

Fortunately, there are ways you can properly dispose of your e-waste. Whenever one of your electronic devices enters the end of its life, or you no longer use it, [take it to a recycling center](#) that accepts electronic devices. Avoid disposing of them in your regular garbage.

If possible, see if someone can repair the device. Even if it isn't up to your operational standards, someone else might find your trash as treasure. Sell it or donate it to someone who can continue to make use of it.

Additionally, reduce the amount of e-waste you produce. Keep using products that still work instead of pining after that new iPhone or newer, bigger television set. Be an environmental and human steward with your electronic devices.

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The EPA is continually working on better methods of e-waste disposal. By doing your part in reducing, reusing and recycling your e-waste, you can help the EPA with its waste management efforts. Electronics are great, especially when you properly dispose of them

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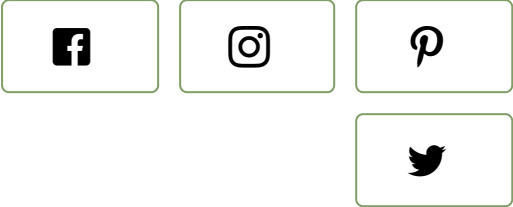




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Starting from an early age, Jane Marsh loved all animals and became a budding environmentalist. Now, Jane works as the Editor-in-Chief of Environment.co where she covers topics related to climate policy, renewable energy, the food industry, and more.

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