

Title:

Get Greener By Recycling Your Computer Equipment

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Summary:

The rapid evolution of information technology is a double-edged sword. While constant improvements allow us to keep doing more in less time, the downside is that electronic equipment quickly becomes obsolete and needs to be replaced by newer, faster models. One obvious drawback of improving technology is the cost of replacing older models, but what happens to the old equipment? Many computer components are highly toxic to the environment, and virtually all electronic equipmen...

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Article Body:

The rapid evolution of information technology is a double-edged sword. While constant improvements allow us to keep doing more in less time, the downside is that electronic equipment quickly becomes obsolete and needs to be replaced by newer, faster models. One obvious drawback of improving technology is the cost of replacing older models, but what happens to the old equipment? Many computer components are highly toxic to the environment, and virtually all electronic equipment utilizes some form of computer technology. What do we do with the computer we're replacing? The group Local Self-Reliance estimates that about 75% of obsolete computers and other IT equipment is being stored, creating a time bomb waiting to go off. It will be a dark day for the environment when we all finally decide to dispose of this clutter.

Mercury, chromium, and lead are a few of the hazardous materials found in batteries, cathode ray tubes, and circuit boards. These toxins will be released into the environment if all this outdated equipment disposed of in traditional ways. Soil and water will be affected if this material is dumped in a landfill, and incineration releases toxic ash into the air.

This is why we shouldn't simply trash our obsolete computers. Many organizations are dedicated to recycling old computer hardware. Recycling helps the environment and enhances quality of life for all of us. There are many volunteer

and nonprofit groups that provide recycling services, recovering over 112 million pounds of valuable materials each year from old computers and other electronic equipment. Glass, plastic, steel, and precious metals can all be reused. Most of us don't realize that even keyboards, CDs, floppy disks, ink cartridges, and power cords contain easily reusable materials. Some peripheral hardware can be utilized with a new computer, such as speakers and reusable disks.

Staples is one company that has instituted a green policy, where old equipment can be dropped off seven days a week for a \$10 handling fee. Company spokesperson Mark Buckley estimates that in this country alone, 13,000 computers are disposed of daily.

According to Mark Buckley, of Staples, which has a green policy on accepting old equipment 7 days a week in a drop-off scheme, for a handling fee of 10\$, estimates that 13,000 computers are disposed of every day in the U.S. While the company keeps many of the component parts, Staples hands off CR tubes and other hazardous materials to Amandi Services, which makes television components utilizing their own recycling technique. Another organization utilizing new technologies to complement and enhance the usual pulverizing and shredding is Creative Recycling. Their reclamation utilizes very efficient dust filters and negative air pressure in a controlled atmosphere. The output of this system includes various metals, plastic, and glass. The company aims to provide cost-effective solutions for government organizations and has invested millions of dollars in equipment in an attempt to lead the development of new recycling technology.

Not many people have noticed that recycling legislation has been passing in Europe for the last five years. That was when the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive was drafted, forcing computer manufacturing companies to pay for the recycling of old equipment in a safe manner. Unfortunately, since the industry operates with very small profit margins, most people believe the costs will be passed on to consumers in the form of higher computer prices. The additional cost per computer could be as much as \$50, according to industry analyst Gartner. And while most people wouldn't balk at paying a small premium to have their old equipment disposed of properly, the European Union is requiring more stringent demands of green components in the future. This will also increase manufacturing costs in the short term, raising prices even higher.

There aren't many companies currently recycling computers in England, but the computer companies themselves are beginning to step up and provide alternatives for recycling old equipment. Dell is one computer manufacturer pioneering new

ways to recycle old computer equipment. Find out more about computer disposal and recycling by visiting their website at <http://www.computer-recycling-center.com>.

Compared to Europe, this country is fortunate to have many local outlets for computer recycling. But don't wait too long to drop off your old computer at a local recycler, because the cost is only going to get higher.