

Managing Used Consumer Electronics

Not too long ago, the phrase “consumer electronics” simply meant a television or stereo, or perhaps a computer. But in this age of rapid technological development, it seems that almost anything powered by an electrical outlet (or even just a battery) will likely have a computer component associated with its operation.

The rise in computer usage alone is quite staggering. During one recent year, for example, an estimated 35 million personal computers (PC's) were sold in the U.S. During that same year another 20.6 million PC's became obsolete - and thus are in need of disposal and/or recycling!



Changes in technology can cause a spike in the number of items needed to be recycled. Computer monitors and television sets each contain from 5-8 pounds of lead, as well as other toxic metals and substances (such as chromium, cadmium, mercury, and PBB's or PCB's). Although these devices are safe to use within your home or office, they do create environmental problems when disposed of in a landfill or waste incinerator. Due to the toxicity of the hazardous materials found in electronics, it is important to manage them in a responsible manner. Computer systems also contain glass, plastic, and valuable metals that can be (and should be) recycled.

Recycle old items

Recycling old electronic equipment keeps hazardous materials out of our landfills, and makes it possible to recover valuable resources. Recyclers typically disassemble units, salvage reusable parts, and send materials to final processors. Several businesses in Minnesota specialize in recycling old electronic or electrical appliances. In addition, the [Scott County HHW Facility](#) now accepts used consumer electronics for a low fee. Please [click here](#) to see a list of local options for recycling your used electronics and other problem materials.

The smart thing to do is also the right thing to do!

When it comes to solid waste, it makes "dollars and cents" to reuse and/or recycle an item instead of simply throwing it away, where it will end up taking up space in a landfill. The fact is, new landfills are very expensive to locate, plan and build – and most folks do not want a new landfill to be located in their community or near their home. This means that we are much better off to use our existing landfill space more wisely! It just doesn't make sense to throw something away that can be reused or recycled and then turn around and mine ore and manufacture the very same new materials, while using more energy and creating more pollution at the same time. Recycling helps to conserve both energy and our natural resources!

For more information, call the Environmental Health Department at 952-496-8475.