

Electronics Recycling

In a Nutshell

Unlike traditional items you can recycle at home - electronics require special consideration when recycled. Computers, cell phones, and televisions contain toxic heavy metals such as lead, cadmium, and mercury and should not be disposed of in a landfill or home recycling bin. Recycling electronics reduces pollution, because new materials are not created, and allows for the reuse of undamaged parts of discarded items.

The “How To”

Donating your Used Electronics

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, preventing waste in the first place is preferable to any waste management option, including recycling. Re-evaluate if that new gadget is really needed and try to extend the life of electronics before disposing of them. Donating used electronics will extend the life of the device, can offer organizations and schools a chance to update their electronic stock, and keeps usable materials out of landfills.

Recycling your Used Electronics

If your electronics cannot be donated, municipalities are increasingly offering electronics recycling through one-day collection events. In most cases, the resident simply needs to take their electronics to the designated location, and the partnering organization recycling them will take them. It is necessary to note, there may be a fee for the recycling of certain electronics; specifically for televisions and computer monitors. Most partnering organizations collecting electronics at one-day events also have year-round permanent facilities to utilize. Contact those organizations directly for locations and pricing.

According to Saint Louis County, there are three major benefits to recycling your electronics:

1. Conserves natural resources - Recycling valuable material reduces the need to mine the earth for raw materials
2. Supports the community - Donating used equipment benefits schools, non-profits, and low-income families
3. Creates jobs locally - As demand for electronics recycling increases, recycling organizations will hire more workers



How to Set up Electronic Recycling Programs

If your municipality or organization wants to establish an electronics recycling program, the Environmental Protection Agency and other similar organizations that recycle electronics are your best resources. Considerations should be given not only to where you are going to hold the electronics, but also to what you do with them once you receive them. Without a proper and appropriate plan of action in place, your building might end up being a warehouse of old electronics.

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Planning & Zoning

Municipal Legislation

There are very few ordinances and statutes directing the electronics recycling habits of local governments. Most of the legislation, as displayed below, relates to the manufacturer and the requirements placed on them by the states. Municipalities and organizations should refer to the state legislation and the US Environmental Protection Agency for further direction regarding local legislation for e-cycling.

State Legislation

In 2008, the Missouri Legislature passed Senate Bill 720. Titled, "[Manufacturer Responsibility and Consumer Convenience Equipment Collection and Recovery Act](#)," the bill states that any computer manufacturer must implement a recovery plan for the collection of or the recycling of used and obsolete equipment.

The Illinois Legislature passed a [law](#) in 2008 creating a statewide system for recycling and/or reusing electronics. The law requires electronic manufacturers and retailers to participate in the management of these discarded electronics. The law also establishes a recycling benchmark system requiring manufacturers to recycle a certain amount of discarded electronics by a certain date. Also, as of January 2010, no manufacturer may sell any computer, monitor, television, or printer to residential customers without registering with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.

Registering your Business for Electronics Recycling

In Illinois, in order for a business to be a registered electronic waste collector, recycler, refurbisher, or any combination of the three, the business must register with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency every year.

In Missouri, it is not mandatory to register with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, in order for your business to accept discarded electronics and recycle them. In order to be included on the [Registered Electronics Recycling Business List](#), however, your business must register. Businesses who want to register with DNR must choose between four levels of increasingly stringent regulations attached to each level. For example, a Level Four business must adhere to more regulations than a Level One business. To view all of the requirements, please click the link above.

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Case Studies

e-cycle St. Louis

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Description

The purpose of this program was to serve as an on-line directory of registered electronics recyclers that complied with regional program guidelines for legitimate recovery of consumer electronics. This was initially set up through a regional solid waste management grant so the companies and organizations were located in Jefferson County, St. Charles County, St. Louis City and St. Louis County.

Cost

After completion of the grant, there are minimal on-going annual host site registration fees and staff time to respond to interested citizen and electronics recyclers' inquiries. The host site fees are paid by the regional solid waste management district so I do not know those costs. I would estimate staff time around 2-3 hours per month.

Lessons Learned

Placing website on a host server has been the biggest problem as the contractor is financially and professionally unreliable. So, the website remains out-of-date most of the time. The other regional partners have not maintained the host site registration process, however St. Louis County already licenses such facilities located in St. Louis County in accordance with our Waste Code. And the additional host site registration is not pursued because of the previously mentioned host site problem. The long-term intent when this St. Louis regional program was implemented was that this website would 'morph' into a statewide website managed by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). The MDNR has implemented their website (ecyclemo.org?) but so far that website does not completely address the St. Louis regional needs.

I receive numerous calls nearly every week that demonstrates the usefulness of this website. The name probably comes up readily on internet searches so that seems effective and helpful for residents/businesses as the interest in recycling grows.

Southampton Neighborhood Electronics Recycling Event

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Description

Partnering with [Midwest Recycling Center \(MRC\)](#), the [Southampton Neighborhood Association](#) hosted a neighborhood recycling event. This free event was marketed within the neighborhood but was open and free to other residents as well. The guidance from MRC was that "if it uses a power cord or batteries, we will be thrilled to recycle it".

Cost

With the exception of televisions, there were no costs to residents. Televisions were limited to one per vehicle. There was a nominal fee for additional televisions.

Lessons Learned

Better promotion with fliers in the neighborhood businesses (we just used social media and our newsletter) and some yard signs day of event would have been good. The location worked well with entrance and exits. Reaching out to the neighborhood churches allowed promotion via the church bulletins. Overall it was a good experience and the Southampton Neighborhood Association plans the event again next year.