

Recycling Our E-Waste

Perhaps you've see all of those commercials recently about the change from analog to digital television. All broadcasters will be required to make the change next year. What are you going to do?

Even if you continue to use your old television, some day you will replace it.

How many computers does your family own? What will you do with them when you get new ones?

What about your cell phones? What will happen to them?

Have you been replacing your standard light bulbs with fluorescents? They'll last a long time, but not forever.

And what about that microwave, that DVD player, your old stereo?

All of these conveniences, some would say necessities, of everyday life that we take for granted, cannot become afterthoughts when we are done with them. They contain dangerous materials and cannot simply be "thrown out" with the trash. They are E-Waste.

What is E-Waste?

Monitors and TV sets

Computers and computer accessories

Printers, fax machines and copiers

Home entertainment and stereo equipment

Phones and cameras

CDs, DVDs, computer disks, video and audio tapes

Batteries (can be recycled at the Township recycling center too)

Microwaves

Fluorescent light fixtures and bulbs

E-waste, if thrown out with the trash, sits in landfills and can contaminate the soil and groundwater with lead, mercury, nickel, cadmium, zinc, flame retardants, and other hazardous materials that “leach out” over time. Some experts estimate that only 15% of our e-waste is being recycled. To help keep us safe, we must recycle our e-waste.

We’re lucky. Recycling e-waste is easy. And there are many opportunities to do it. Here are just a few.

The Sussex County Municipal Utilities Authority holds free e-waste days four times a year (maximum of 10 items or systems). Load up the car and drive up to Lafayette. You never even have to get out of your vehicle. The next scheduled days are August 16th and October 18th. (The County’s definition of e-waste includes only ‘consumer electronics’—check the website at www.scmua.org.) Fluorescent bulbs can be recycled free all year—very important because of the mercury content.

Back Thru the Future Computer Recycling, Inc. in Ogdensburg will recycle your computer e-waste at low cost.

Most major computer and appliance manufacturers have recycling programs for their products. These include Dell, HP, LG, NEC, Nokia, AT&T, Sharp, and more! Even some major retailers like Best Buy and Staples participate in recycling. Check their websites for details. Also check the New Jersey DEP and federal EPA websites for additional information, ideas, and links.

What Happens to my E-Waste?

Your e-waste gets **DE**-manufactured, a fancy word for broken down into its different parts and materials. Even individual circuit boards are de-manufactured. Typically, glass is crushed, plastic parts are separated, as are the different metals. These can include gold, silver, platinum, aluminum, and steel. These materials are then sold to other companies who melt them down and re-use them in new products.

There are also companies like Urban Renewal Corp who take unwanted computers and use them to retrain and rehabilitate people in need of

opportunities and jobs. They recently completed a collection drive in cooperation with Troop 276 and the Byram Township Schools.

The important thing to remember is e-waste is not trash. It must be recycled and re-used.