

The Dirty Secret about eWaste

It doesn't matter what you read today: You'll find multiple ads for "eWaste Recycling" events, offering you a chance to clean out your office, garage, house and car.

eWaste is the catch all term for "electronic waste" which covers televisions, cell phones, microwaves, VCRs/DVD players, computer parts and monitors, printers, cables, batteries, CDs/DVDs, and much more. Non profits, sports teams, Chambers of Commerce, local bands, and social organizations have jumped on this new, lucrative fund raiser, receiving payment by the metric ton for all eWaste collected.

Network World wrote this month: "Are your old computers poisoning people in the third world?" Folks - this is a big deal (huge). eWaste dumping, what 20/20 calls the "electronic wasteland", is making people very sick. Americans own 3 billion electronic gadgets, and we are dumping our old stuff in China, Ghana, Nigeria, and India to the detriment of those citizens, turning towns like Guiyu, China into smelly, toxic, cancerous dumps.

Few countries provide the protection for their citizens (Zambia is one) that ensures that electronics transported into the country are useful, rather than toxic waste.

Because the US lacks the capacity to recycle all of its eWaste, we send it to other countries for recycling. Rivers turn pitch black, and people breath fumes of burning metals and plastics. The flame retardants used in plastics and circuit boards, solders containing lead and tin, barium and lead in cathode ray tubes, mercury, and beryllium alloys in connectors, improperly discarded, create hazardous waste.

The US is the only country that makes exporting recycling legal. (Although European countries continually bend their own rules and export eWaste to Africa.)



Here's what you can do to take action:

- * Pressure vendors to remove toxics at the earliest possible date
- * Pressure recyclers to recycle onshore in the United States
- * Look for reuse in the electronics you discard (for schools, seniors, low income folks), before considering recycling options
- * Don't replace your electronics until you have to

By the way, the IT vendors who offer free recycling often sell their contracts to other vendors who do not manage the downstream process within the United States.

To learn more about Green IT Computing, make sure to come back to the All Covered Learning Center. We see the importance of Green Computing and are actively working to build it into our day to day way we do business and continue to work to be the thought leader in the area.

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