



A Growing Problem: Discarded TVs and Computers

TVs and computer monitors contain lead

Would you throw 2 pounds of lead in your garbage? Probably not.

Yet when someone disposes of a TV or computer monitor in the garbage, they do just that.

- TVs and computer monitors can contain from 2 to 8 pounds of lead as well as mercury, cadmium and PCBs. TVs and computer monitors are considered the largest single source of lead in Minnesota's garbage.

Lead and other heavy metals can cause damage to health and the environment. According to the Minnesota Department of Health, lead poisoning can cause learning, behavioral and health problems in young children and high blood pressure, kidney damage and damage to the reproductive organs in adults.

New Technologies
= more obsolete
units discarded

There are a lot of TVs and computer monitors in Minnesota homes that people will want to get rid of eventually.

- More than 3.5 million TVs are in Minnesota homes today, and another 2.0 million computer monitors are in Minnesota homes and businesses. Changes in technology such as digital broadcast television and flat screens shorten the useful lives of electronic devices and promise to increase the amount of electronics that will be discarded in the future.

Old TVs
and computer
monitors should be
recycled

If not in the garbage can, where should old TVs and computer monitors go?

- These wastes do not belong in the garbage with other mixed wastes. In the 2003 session, the State Legislature prohibited the disposal of cathode ray tubes found in TVs and computer monitors in mixed wastes, effective July 1, 2005. Discarded TVs and computer monitors can and should be recycled. Nearly all of the component parts, including the lead and glass, can be recycled or recovered.
- In 2002, news of shipment of old TVs and computers to countries such as China became widely known. Old electronic equipment from the U.S. was being broken down in unsafe conditions and seriously contaminated local waters. We need to work hard to be sure that this method of disposal of our wastes does not happen. (For more information, go to [www. http://www.computertakeback.com](http://www.computertakeback.com))

Currently, recycling options for residents are not adequate

It's not easy at this time for Minnesota residents to get their discarded electronics recycled.

While residents frequently store old TVs and monitors after they are no longer useful, there comes a point in time when these items become a nuisance.

- Many waste haulers do not pick up TVs and computer monitors, and those who do often charge a fee.
- Recycling options that exist are not always conveniently located or open at times that are convenient for residents.
- Recyclers that take old TVs and computer monitors charge fees that some residents consider too expensive.

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Convenient and affordable options are needed for citizens to recycle discarded electronics
Getting Industry to Help

What can I do about this problem?

Who is responsible for addressing this growing problem?

Government alone cannot be responsible for the growing volume of discarded electronics and associated costs.

- At an average cost of \$10 - \$15 per unit to disassemble and recycle a TV or computer monitor, the cost to Minnesota taxpayers could be \$3,000,000 per year or more.

Metropolitan counties are joining efforts to get manufacturers to participate in solving this problem.

- It's called "product stewardship" - asking manufacturers to share responsibility for products they sell when those products reach the end of their useful lives.
- Product stewardship efforts relating to electronics are in place in Europe, Japan and Canada, but progress in the United States has been slow, and the problem remains unsolved.
- Some manufacturers have initiated voluntary programs, but so far, not enough has been done. It remains difficult for citizens to find out how to recycle old TVs and computers, with inconvenient locations, few hours of operation, and fees for recycling.

Become informed. Go to GreenGuardian.com to learn more:

www.GreenGuardian.com/throw6.asp.

Also consider:

- Contacting manufacturers to let them know about your concerns.
- Asking your local retailer to support manufacturer responsibility for recycling old TVs and computers.
- Supporting legislative efforts to get manufacturers to help solve the problem.

Information and suggestions about these actions can also be found at

www.GreenGuardian.com/throw6.asp , by clicking on "The Latest E-Waste Trends" button at the top of the page.

