

Grand Island Area Clean Community System Electronic Recycling.

Most of us are surrounded by electronics in our homes – computers, MP3 players, game consoles, old wood counsel and flat panel TV's and countless other digital devices. Each time we upgrade to the latest model, we've got an electronic device on our hands that, as far as our own needs are concerned, is obsolete. So where does it go, if not to the growing pile of logoeed plastic and metal in the basement? Why not just throw it out?

There are lots of reasons why something like your old computer shouldn't go out with the trash. First, it may not be trash at all. Sure, it's pre 1995, it's not going to do anyone much good. But if you bought it in the last 10 years or so, it can possibly be upgraded or refurbished and be of great use to someone who doesn't have the money to buy a new one. If you do have a relic on your hands, tossing it is still not the best way to go. If you throw out your old electronics, not only are you taking up increasingly scarce landfill space with valuable resources like plastic, metal and glass that could be made into new devices using less energy than it takes with virgin resources, but you're putting potentially toxic materials in the ground. Lead, mercury and other substances can leech from old monitors and circuit boards into the air and ground water and possibly affect people's health. In some countries and many US states, particular electronics components are regulated as hazardous waste. So, if you're not going to put your old computer in the dumpster, you're down to two choices: reuse or recycle. If the device is in good working order, reuse is the better option. Refurbishing is easier on the environment than recycling. Recycling uses energy, and the longer you can keep the non-recyclable parts out of a landfill, the better. Many computers are built to be easily demanufactured into their component parts for easy recycling. Some devices may require more energy to recycle, but it's still better than tossing them into the landfill.

Electronics recycling is a fairly new industry, and it's far from centralized at this point. It take a good deal of research to figure out how to properly recycle electronics. At Grand Island Area Clean Community System (CCS) they collect electronics daily. They do not charge a fee for most electronics, but the older TV's contain mercury so they do have to charge for them. For the period of July 2021 through May of 2022, CCS accepted and recycled 12,962 pounds of electronics. To help the public understand the importance of recycling electronics, CCS enlisted the services of GI Family Radio to advertise the importance of recycling and where to bring unwanted devices. The cost of marketing their recycling was \$250 per month over a 9 month period. They also partnered with the City of Grand Island to mail two inserts about recycling, in the July and March utility billing. Year-round information is available on their Web site and Facebook. To ensure that personal information is not compromised during recycling, CCS utilized the services of E-Stroyed a local company specializing in electronic recycling. They provide the transportation, sorting, teardown, and wipes all hard drives. Some owners ask for a Certificate of Destruction which E-Stroyed also provide. As for older TV's containing Mercury, these units are shipped intact to out-of-state recyclers specializing in capturing the mercury and tearing down into separate recyclable components. Are you aware that older TV tubs can be recycled into subway tiles to be used in bathroom or kitchens?

The electronic industry and government have tried to address the e-waste problem. In 2000, the Product Stewardship Institute, launched the National Electronic Product Stewardship Initiative (NEPSI) in hopes of increasing collection, reuse, and recycling. However, over several years of negotiations it broke down on how to finance it. Fortunately, CCS is able to apply for grants through Nebraska Environmental Trust and Nebraska Environmental & Energy to conduct daily recycling of electronics.

Funding comes from the Nebraska Lottery and from a tip fee through Nebraska solid waste landfills. With each grant, grantees must come up with matching or in-kind funds.

Without the assistance from Grand Island Rotary and Rotary District 5630, CCS would have been restricted in its collection. Grand Island Rotary and CCS would like to thank the Rotarian's of 5630 for their generous support.

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