

E-Scrap 101

General Q & A on How and Why to Recycle Your Electronics

Q: What's the difference between electronic waste, e-waste, and e-scrap?

A: No difference. "E-waste" and "e-scrap" are simply short versions of the term "electronic waste."

Q: What exactly is e-waste?

A: E-waste is a broad term that encompasses a great deal. Generally speaking, if an item plugs in, takes a charge, takes batteries, or has a circuit board in it, it is considered to be electronic and therefore should be a part of your collected e-waste.

Remember, too, that much of what is categorized as e-waste or e-scrap is not actually scrap, but simply retiring equipment that a company no longer needs. In many cases, this equipment still has value, and can potentially be refreshed or refurbished so that it can still be used. Computers are by far the best example of this.

Q: Can't we just throw all of this in the dumpster, or take it to a landfill? We already have a waste service company.

A: Depending on which state you are in, it might be legal for you to do this. But no matter where you are, this is **not** the responsible way to handle your electronic waste. Much of your e-scrap contains toxic materials like arsenic, beryllium, cadmium, mercury, and lead. Tossing these materials into dumpsters and landfills allows those toxins to seep into the ground and nearby waterways, damaging the environment - and the living creatures - in the area.

Q: We just don't have room to collect electronics. Our warehouse/dock/business is too small for a bunch of stuff. How are we supposed to recycle?

A: This is a common occurrence; many businesses are challenged by available space, or lack of it. However, there are multiple methods by which you can collect your old electronics. The best method to resolve this is to talk to your electronics recycler about your collection options.

Bins for e-scrap don't always have to sit inside, and with the electronics we use getting smaller and smaller, you'd be surprised at what you can fit into even one collection container. Bins have come a long way over the years, too.

If you simply cannot collect e-scrap regularly, you may want to consider holding a yearly company recycling event. This can serve the dual purpose of allowing your employees to recycle items from their homes, while also allowing the business to recycle its own materials. These can be done over the course of just a few days and do not require the constant presence of collection containers at your site. This, too, should be taken up with your electronics recycler.



Q: So what do you guys *do* with these electronics?

A: That all depends upon the nature of the equipment involved. Working electronics that are approved for reuse by the customer are tested for functionality, sanitized of data, and then refurbished and remarketed. This process keeps these units out of the waste stream, and allows them to continue their service lives.

Items that are completely outdated or no longer working are de-manufactured, which involves breaking them down into their component pieces and recovering the metals contained within. Many electronics contain valuable materials like copper, aluminum, silver, and even gold. The multi-stage de-manufacturing process extracts these metals for reuse, and recycles the plastics the devices contain.

Hazardous materials, such as the lead in cathode-ray TVs and computer monitors, are extracted and processed at EPA-approved facilities.