

PENNSYLVANIA RESOURCES COUNCIL

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) ON ELECTRONIC WASTE RECYCLING IN PENNSYLVANIA

Time is hard on people and electronics.

Pennsylvania Resources Council (PRC) is partnering with environmentally certified recycler ECOvanta to hold electronic waste (aka e-waste) collection events throughout southeastern Pennsylvania. This FAQ answers common questions about electronic recycling in Pennsylvania and about PRC's collection events.

Q. Is electronics recycling required by law in Pennsylvania?

The Covered Device Recycling Act (CDRA), Pennsylvania Act 108, was voted into law in November of 2010. Beginning in January of 2012 the first phase requirement of the Act went into place. Simply put CDRA requires manufactures and retailers of "covered devices" to close the loop on recycling certain electronic devices (referred to in CDRA as "covered devices") and mandate that recycling processors meet certain environmental standards to safely recycle these devices. By January, 2013 a disposal ban of all "covered devices" goes into place which means that no electronic waste may be a part of municipal waste, will be accepted in a landfill, or may be taken to a solid waste disposal facility.

Q. What are the "Covered Devices" referred to in the Act?

These include desk top computers, laptop computers, computer monitors and TVs both flat screen and CRT's (-old-style cathode ray tube monitors) and computer peripherals.

Q. What other electronic devices are accepted at PRC's collection events?

Anything with a cord except Freon items and large appliances: stoves, dishwashers, washing machines, dryers

Q. How do manufactures close the loop for recycling e-waste?

They are required to make collection programs available and most have satisfied the law by paying recyclers like Ecovanta to collect and process this product for them in compliance with the Act.

Q. What creates electronic waste?

Rapid changes in technology, changes in media (tapes, software, MP3), falling prices, and planned obsolescence have resulted in a fast-growing surplus of electronic waste around the globe. Processors are most frequently out-dated (by software) and are more likely to become "e-waste", while display units are most often replaced while working without repair attempts, due to changes in wealthy nation appetites for new display technology.

Q. How much electronic waste is generated in the United States each year?

The United States is the world leader in producing electronic waste, tossing away about 3 million tons each year. Worldwide an estimated 50 million tons of E-waste are produced each year. The USA discards 30 million computers each year.

Q. How can I be sure the recycler is properly disposing of the e-waste?

Processors of electronic waste must apply for and obtain certifications relating to electronic waste recycling to operate under PA Act 108. Currently the two certifications accepted under PA Act 108 are Responsible Recycling R2 and e-Stewards. Pennsylvania Resources Council's recycling partner is R2 certified for electronic waste recycling and ISO 14001 certified as an environmentally sound company.

Q. I am concerned about identity theft. How can I be sure the information on my hard drive won't end up in the wrong hands?

PRC and Ecovanta both have reputations to protect when it comes to this issue. We understand everyone's concern about confidential information. This applies to both consumer product and company assets. Ecovanta's processing plant is a secure site. No one will have access to the recycled product that is not insured by Ecovanta. For additional security, and at a cost of \$5.00 per unit, they can wipe clean your hard drive and provide certification that destruction was complete. For most consumers that expense is not necessary because of our product handling protocols. Product accepted by PRC is

collected by Ecovanta and delivered to their processing site for secure destruction. There is no other handler and no secondary market.

Q. Why should I recycle my old electronics?

According to the E.P.A., electronic waste contributes 70% of the toxins found in landfills, while only contributing 1% of the volume of materials in landfills. Electronic waste contains many toxic materials including lead, mercury, cadmium, phosphors and flame-retardants. Recycling your electronics waste decreases energy and water use, reduces pollution, and keeps hazardous chemicals out of our air and water. Electrical waste contains hazardous but also valuable and scarce materials. Up to 60 elements can be found in complex electronics. Recycling of copper, silver, gold, and other materials from discarded electronic devices is considered better for the environment than mining.

Beyond the environmental benefits, electronic recycling is the law under PA Act 108, so your trash hauler will no longer accept these items at curbside.

Q. How does Ecovanta recycle equipment?

ECOVanta will safely manage your end-of-life electronics using a combination of manual disassembly and an automated shredding system to separate materials into commodities for recycling. Some component materials such as metals are then sent to other environmentally certified facilities to further separate materials mechanically or chemically. The resulting recycled materials are then sold on commodity markets as raw materials for reuse in new products. Hazardous materials such as fluorescent lamps and batteries found in many types of electronics made today will be separated and sent to licensed facilities for proper management as universalwaste.

ECOVanta will recycle and/or recover as much material as possible and the small fraction that cannot be recycled will be sent to a Covanta Energy-from-Waste (EfW) facility for energy recovery.

Q. SO why is PRC in the electronic waste collection business?

First and foremost the collections help fulfill our mission of increasing the recycling of waste in Pennsylvania and beyond. Our longstanding involvement in

recycling and environmental best practices has qualified us to vet electronic waste processors, to ensure to collection participants, that e-waste items are handled appropriately under the PA Act 108 requirements.

We anticipate that the implementation of Act 108 and other recycling initiatives will incentivize the creation of hardware technology with less waste and a longer shelf life in response to customer and legislative demand, further supporting our recycling and waste reduction mission. For example, recent legislation has passed that required cell phone manufacturers to provide universal chargers that can be reused with multiple products.

Similarly, compact flat screen monitors and tvs that are all the rage has ended the production of traditional CRT tvs and monitors.

Beyond that, the requirements in PA Act 108 that manufacturers must build the cost of recycling of these materials into the initial purchase price, coupled with the commodity value of the recycled materials, has created the opportunity for revenue sharing between certified recyclers such as ECOvanta and nonprofit organizations such as PRC. Each time someone recycles an electronic item at a PRC event, a portion of the revenue generated goes toward other important PRC environmental education and outreach programs. These creative partnerships to generate revenue are ever more critical to organizations like PRC in this era of deep belt-tightening among our traditional government, corporate, and foundation funding sources.