Save the Planet with Better E-Waste Management

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MANSFIELD, OHIO - Fifty million tons of electronic waste (e-waste) is produced each year around the globe. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the US discarded 30 million computers in 2012, and more than 100 million phones are disposed of annually across Europe. Even worse, only 15% to 20% of e-waste is recycled, according to the EPA. The rest is thrown into landfills, polluting our air and damaging our health. How can we better dispose of our e-waste?

The term "e-waste" refers to any electronic items that are discarded, usually because they are damaged or outdated. It includes computers, keyboards, printers, circuit boards, motherboards, monitors, DVD players, scanners, televisions, video game consoles, MP3 players and mobile phones.

Although we live with these products in our homes every day, e-waste is not safe. When thrown into landfills or refuse tips, it produces what are known as leachates: rainwater and other precipitation that has passed through the pile of e-waste and picked up contaminants. These leachates eventually reach ground level, are absorbed into the earth and pollute groundwater.

Electronic products such as the front panels of CRT computer monitors and motherboards, for example, contain barium and beryllium. When ingested, these substances weaken muscles, cause lung cancer and damage skin.

At the same time, many electronic items contain valuable metals, such as copper and gold. By throwing our e-waste into landfills, we not only pollute the environment, but squander all the components and materials that could be recycled or reused.

Consequently, we need to find better, less wasteful ways of disposing of our used electronic goods.

E-waste Management Options

There are a number of better ways to dispose of e-waste than just throwing it into a landfill. Let's look at the three most common:

1. Sell or donate

Rather than throwing electronic appliances into the trash, we can kill two birds with one stone: dispose of our e-waste and make money at the same time. Most damaged gadgets can be sold to companies or individuals who dismantle them. They then reuse the undamaged components to repair or build other items.

Alternatively, for a more generous approach, electronic equipment can be donated to a variety of charities. It is then sold to generate revenue. Some charities also accept outdated equipment and reuse it in underprivileged countries and communities where it is greatly appreciated.

2. Return them to the manufacturer

Most modern manufacturers are aware of the dangers of e-waste. More importantly, they accept that they are partly responsible for causing the problem, by encouraging us to keep upgrading to the latest models!

As a direct result of this, the big manufacturers usually offer a trade-in or take-back program. Apple, Microsoft, Dell, Hewlett-Packard, Panasonic and Samsung all have policies that allow them to take your gear, recycling and reusing what they can before disposing of it responsibly on your behalf. If you're lucky, they may even give you a reduction on a replacement.

3. Recycle them

Recycling facilities are important e-waste management centers. They collect discarded equipment and then process it for re-use. This not only helps prevent environmental pollution, but reduces greenhouse gas emissions as well.

With technology use on the rise around the world, the majority of recycling centers already accept e-waste. In developed countries, such as the US, UK and Canada, there is already at least one recycling center per town and city. Serious efforts are being made to build more centers in developing nations, particularly in Africa and Asia.

Modern life makes computers, gadgets and cell phones all but essential in our day-to-day communication. With more than fifty million tons of e-waste thrown out every year, the world faces a challenge that needs urgent attention, and recycling is the only sustainable solution to this global waste problem.

Here in Mid-Ohio Ace Computers and Graphics works hard to ensure that your e-waste stays

out of our local landfills. If your unsure what to do or where to drop it off give us a call at 419-522-9364.

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