

January 2009

E-Cycle Washington
The Teletubbies Would be Proud



A lot is happening this January to influence change: a new president is being sworn into office, television stations are preparing to switch to digital broadcasting and electronics manufacturers are starting to pay for the responsible recycling of their products.

In 2005 the European Union banned unused or broken electronics- categorized as “e-waste” from landfills across Europe. As a result, electronic waste processing skyrocketed in Europe. Currently, the United States Congress is considering a number of electronic waste bills including the *National Computer Recycling Act*; however the bill has not yet risen to priority. In the meantime, several states have passed their own laws regarding electronic waste management, including our very own Washington. Starting January 1, 2009, it became a requirement for manufacturers, under a Washington State law that was passed in 1996, to provide recycling services for electronic waste at no cost to households, small businesses, charities, schools, and small governments. The program is called *E-Cycle Washington* and will follow performance standards set up by the Department of Ecology.

But why is this improvement to recycling so important? Many electronics, especially TVs and computers, contain toxic materials such as lead, cadmium and mercury. If placed in a landfill these heavy metals would eventually leach into groundwater, a natural resource which we heavily depend on for drinking, washing and bathing. That’s to say, if recycled properly e-waste can be a valuable source of secondary raw materials, but if not it can be a major source of pollution. That’s why many states have banned all electronics from ever reaching landfills; however for a long time this still didn’t make getting rid of unwanted electronics easy for the average consumer. Why? Because each time they disposed of their electronics they were charged a plump little fee in order for the electronics to be taken apart and separated into materials such as glass, plastic, metal and toxic chemicals- some of which were then recycled. Those fees could have cost you a total of \$40.00 or more if you were recycling both a computer monitor and tower. But things have changed.

One of the most inspiring modifications of the new *E-Cycle Washington* program is that it will lead as an example for *Producer Responsibility*. This implies that the company that makes a product is responsible for minimizing the product's environmental impact throughout all stages of the product’s life cycle, including end of life management. Not to mention, the manufacturer has to provide these services practically free of charge to electronics consumers.

The Washington Materials Management and Financing Authority (WMMFA) is the organization that sets up and runs *E-Cycle Washington* on behalf of the 200 member manufacturers that sell computers and TVs in Washington State. The WMMFA has negotiated with collection sites throughout the state to provide the recycling of televisions, computers, computer monitors and portable or laptop computers. Right now, there are five locations anticipating being involved in the collection process in Skagit County.

Aktion Club of Anacortes

418 30th St.

Anacortes, WA 98221

The drop-off site will be in a warehouse in the industrial district just east of the Tommy Thompson Trail and will be open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. every second and fourth Saturday of the month.

Goodwill Mount Vernon Store

102 Valley Mall Way

Mount Vernon, WA 98273

(360) 848-0646

Goodwill Mount Vernon will be open for electronics drop-off Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m.-7 p.m. and Sunday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Sedro-Woolley City Recycling Facility

315 Sterling

Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284

The City Recycling Facility will be open for electronics drop-off Monday from 8 a.m.-4 p.m., they are located at the corner of 3rd and Sterling.

Salvation Army Mt Vernon Thrift Store

1101 E. College Way

Mount Vernon, WA 98273

360-424-6441

The Salvation Army of Mount Vernon will be open for electronics drop-off Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Many other electronic products such as cell phones, DVD players and electronic games can also be recycled. Some collectors who participate in the *E-Cycle Washington* program will recycle these other electronic items, but they may charge a fee. Be sure to verify whether your electronic product is accepted by calling the drop-off location prior to leaving your home. To find a location that recycles materials not accepted at your local drop-off location visit <http://1800recycle.wa.gov> or call 1-800-RECYCLE.

The launch of new *E-Cycle Washington* endeavors to make both electronics manufacturers responsible, and our wallets a little fatter, yet one of the most important changes we can make as electronics consumers in 2009 is reflecting on the amount of natural resources we use each time we purchase a new laptop or DVD player, boot up our desktop computer, or choose to leave it running even though we're not using it.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, in 1995 just one year before the e-waste law was passed, more than 1.5 million tons of electronics went to landfills. And according to the Washington State Department of Ecology, it's estimated that 365,000 televisions and 780,000 computers will run out of juice this year and need proper disposal. So if some of the electronics you wish to recycle are still in good condition a great option is to look into donation or reuse by contacting local charities or reuse authorities. And if the juice really does run out, you may want to consider repair. Worried about having your personal information passed along? Many computer refurbishing companies go the extra mile to make sure all of your personal information has been wiped clean from the hard drive before re-selling your computer to someone else.

Locally you may try computer repair and refurbishment at Computer Source, located in Mount Vernon. Computer Source has recently begun to focus its effort on going Green!

Computer Source

1844 South Burlington Boulevard
Burlington, WA 98233
(360) 855-0730
www.computersourcenw.com

Although they are a small ways south, Total Reclaim in Seattle has been an expert on computer recycling and refurbishment for almost 20 years. If you are interested in learning more, or buying a top-of-the-line reused computer you can contact them at:

Total Reclaim

2200 6th Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98134
(260) 343-7443
www.totalreclaim.com