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Electronics recycling fees serve a purpose

Electronics recycling has taken hold in Wisconsin, thanks in part to the 2009 electronics recycling law. Residents of most counties can now find electronics collection events or permanent electronics collection sites nearby. Finding a collection site that accepts electronics for free, however, is becoming increasingly difficult.

Responsible electronics recyclers are facing a new and challenging problem: the glass inside of boxy tube TVs and computer monitors. The leaded glass in old TVs and monitors is toxic. Until recently, the glass was easily recycled into new tube TVs and monitors. But since the market for box-style devices has nearly dried up, recyclers have had to pay more to properly recycle the leaded glass.

Fees help responsible recyclers recover both the valuable and toxic materials from electronics while protecting worker safety. Informal or backyard “recyclers” may take your devices for free, but you have no guarantee that what you give them will be recycled, or that the toxic components will be properly managed. Many informal recyclers get in over their heads and have trouble finding places to take glass and plastic for recycling. As a result, informal recycling often leads to illegal dumping of toxic glass and other low-value components, requiring expensive cleanups.

E-Cycle Wisconsin, Wisconsin’s electronics recycling program, has a network of registered electronics collectors around the state. The collectors in this program are inspected by the Department of Natural Resources and send the electronics they collect to recyclers that are also registered with the program. When you use a registered site, you can have greater confidence that you are actually recycling your old electronics.

The DNR maintains an up-to-date list of collection sites registered with E-Cycle Wisconsin. Residents can find permanent drop-off sites and upcoming special collection events in their county. Go to dnr.wi.gov and search “ecycle” for details.

FOR QUESTIONS CONTACT: E-Cycle Wisconsin, (608) 266-2111 or DNRWae-cycling@wisconsin.gov