



E-Scrap

What is E-Scrap? E-scrap refers to electronic products that are nearing or at the end of their useful life. These products are most commonly considered obsolete, broken or irreparable. E-scrap often contains precious metals like gold and silver as well as toxic substance such as chromium and barillium.

How Much is Out There? Research has estimated that nearly 75 percent of old electronics are in storage in part because consumers are uncertain of how to manage these materials. In addition, the computer industry is continually marketing new and improved products. As manufacturers make these technological advances, consumers follow the saying, "Out with the old and in with the new". As a result, an overwhelming volume of e-waste is generated every year, challenging communities to develop an environmentally responsible management system.

Is It Hazardous? E-Scrap that is not taken to a collection center often ends up in landfills or incinerators. As a result, toxic substances commonly found in electronics such as lead, cadmium, and mercury have the capability of contaminating land, air, and water. Accumulation of these substances in the environment is toxic to humans, animals, plants, and microorganisms. In order to prevent such toxins from affecting our environment, e-scrap recycling programs must be established that responsibly manage old electronics.

How is E-Scrap Recycled? While there are full-time permanent collection centers for e-scrap in New Mexico, many communities support take back events to collect this material. From the collection center, e-scrap is sent to a dismantler who recovers the valuable materials and manages the toxic materials safely. These dismantlers often charge a fee for their services as the cost to sort and handle the many different materials found in e-scrap is frequently more than the value of the salvaged materials.

What About Data Security? One of the greatest challenges in managing e-scrap is ensuring that any old information on a computer is secured and destroyed. Most e-scrap handlers address this problem appropriately, but customers should always ask for assurance that their data will be handled responsibly.



E-Scrap Markets

As a potentially toxic material, great care must be taken in selecting a market for e-scrap. Many e-scrap recyclers are willing to claim anything to secure a supply. They may deny they export material for processing to poorer countries with limited or no environmental safeguards, yet ship to these places anyway. Ultimately, you have control and can demand documentation of their markets and processors as well as written guarantees of their commitment to environmental standards. Many resources are available to help you choose the best market for your e-scrap, some are listed below:

www.estewards.org

www.ban.org

www.epa.gov/osw/conservation/materials/ecycling/pubs.htm

www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/11/06/60minutes/main4579229.shtml