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## **Recycle electronics instead of trashing them this holiday season**

The holidays often bring new electronic toys—big-screen TVs, smartphones, laptops and more. When you find that shiny new gadget under the tree, you may want to get rid of some of your old electronics gathering dust.

A 2016 E-Cycle Wisconsin survey showed that Wisconsin households have an estimated 1.7 million unused TVs, 2.1 million unused computers, and 4.2 million unused cell phones. Under Wisconsin's electronics recycling law, these and many other electronics cannot be put in the trash.

You can recycle old, unwanted or non-functioning household electronics at one of the nearly 400 E-Cycle Wisconsin collection sites around the state. Many items are accepted for no charge. Current market conditions have caused collectors to charge for some items that are more difficult to recycle, especially TVs and monitors that contain lead or mercury.

Many electronics contain harmful materials like mercury, lead, cadmium and other heavy metals, as well as chemical flame retardants. When disposed of improperly, these pollutants can pose a risk to human and environmental health.

Electronics also contain valuable, reusable materials, including steel, plastic, gold, silver, copper and glass. Properly recycling these materials reduces the need for new raw materials.

“Electronics are resources that are too valuable to waste, and we can help both our economy and the environment by recycling them,” said Sarah Murray, E-Cycle Wisconsin program coordinator.

E-Cycle Wisconsin collectors may ask customers to pay a fee before accepting electronics. This fee will help cover the cost of recycling toxic or low-value materials in the device while keeping workers safe. The payments electronics manufacturers make to recyclers do not always fully cover the cost of responsible recycling. It may be up to you, the consumer, to cover the difference.

The costs of avoiding a recycling fee at an established collector could be much higher than people realize. “Dumping and pollution aside, information you entered into your computer or cell phone, like credit card numbers, social security numbers and passwords, can all be accessed long after the computer or phone stops working,” Murray said. “Simply deleting old documents does not make them disappear. You need to do a complete memory wipe, which many responsible electronics recyclers will do for you.”

To find the E-Cycle Wisconsin collection site nearest you, go to [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search “e-cycle.” The “Find an electronics collection site” button will allow you to search for a collector by county. For questions, contact the E-Cycle Wisconsin program at (608) 266-2111 or [DNRWae-cycling@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNRWae-cycling@wisconsin.gov).