

WHY IS IT SO HARD TO RECYCLE TELEVISIONS AND COMPUTERS?



PA Law didn't intend to make electronic disposal less convenient, but it has.



Like many in Pennsylvania, we have become accustomed to simply taking trash and recycling to the curb and having it hauled away, or taking recyclable items to a local drop-off or participating in a special collection event for recycling. These options have made it convenient to do the right thing.

Because of the unintended consequences of the Covered Device Recycling Act, it's harder than ever to dispose of certain electronics, particularly old televisions and computer monitors. Haulers aren't permitted to take these items to the landfill — under the law, these items must be recycled.

What's the point of this law?

The Covered Device Recycling Act (Act 108 of 2010) had a good purpose. Electronic devices contain valuable and recoverable materials such as aluminum, copper, gold, silver, plastics and ferrous metals, so there is real value in recycling these materials. Additionally, knowing that everyday electronics contain lead, cadmium and mercury that are very hazardous, the law's intent was to keep these materials out of the landfill. It was a win for the economy and a win for the environment.

The covered devices covered by the law:

- TVs
- Desktop and laptop computers
- Computer monitors
- Peripherals (anything that connects to a computer such as a mouse, printer, keyboard, hard drive, etc.)



The Act established free manufacturer recycling programs for residents *and* a disposal ban for all covered electronic devices. **All covered devices would be recycled at no cost.** To make sure these electronics were dealt with properly, landfills and other solid waste disposal facilities could no longer accept these items.

Why is the law not working?

Unfortunately, the impact of Act 108 has created a supply and demand imbalance that makes it cost-prohibitive for electronics recycling vendors to operate in Pennsylvania. According to a letter from the Electronics Recyclers Association of PA (ERAP), "The Pennsylvania E-Scrap Recycling Industry is shrinking, not growing" because there is not enough financial support (as the law intended) from electronics manufacturers to cover collection, transportation and recycling. As a result, **electronics processors are closing sites or opting out of service.**

Implementing Act 108 has presented some challenges. As the Dept. of Environmental Protection explained in a report to the Pennsylvania General Assembly, some major issues need to be addressed in order to make this recycling program successful:

- There is still **no dependable statewide collection and processing infrastructure** so that local governments, collectors and recyclers can operate and provide recycling services on a continuing basis.

- **TVs and computer monitors with cathode ray tubes (CRTs) are a big problem**, due to their leaded glass, an absence of low-cost recycling technology, and a limited number of CRT processors.
- The **cost for processing and recycling CRTs** has increased.
- Many municipalities have **discontinued their electronics recycling programs**, and many retailers and second-hand stores have stopped accepting TVs.

In short, Pennsylvania's e-waste crisis won't be remedied until the law is fixed.

In communities across the state, the illegal dumping of e-waste is occurring. Dumping of any waste is harmful to the environment, illegal and costly to surrounding communities with the average community cleanup costing around \$3,000. To make matters worse, electronic devices contain lead, cadmium and mercury that, if not properly managed or contained, pose a big threat to human health and the environment.

What is being done and what you can do to help.

Efforts are currently underway to make changes to the law. Once the Covered Device Recycling Act (Act 108 of 2010) is amended, you and every other Pennsylvania resident should have access to convenient and free electronics recycling options.

Information on things you can do to help can be found at this web site:

<http://ewastepa.org/take-action/>

Don't tolerate the dumping of e-waste or any other type of garbage in your community. If you spot dumping activity, notify your local authorities.

Resources for electronics recycling in Butler County:

Specifically for the devices that have been banned from landfills by Act 108 such as televisions, computers and computer equipment, the following places take these items in Butler County as of 7/13/2016:

ECS&R (129 Ash Stop Rd., off Route 68 between Butler and Evans City) toll-free 1-866-815-0016 for info. (Takes all types of electronics and fees apply.)

Goodwill of SW Pa., 370 New Castle Rd, Butler, 16001 724.284.1037 (*computers only*)

Goodwill of SW Pa., 20668 Perry Hwy, Cranberry Twp, 16066 724.776.0958 (*computers only*)

Salvation Army, 1623 N Main St, Butler, 16001 724.285.8282 (*TV's only – that can be lifted by one person, nothing heavier, and no old models with wooden cabinets*)

Staples Office Supply Store, 110 Moraine Pointe Plaza, Butler, 16001 724.282.1109 (*computers and computer equipment only*)

Sources: Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful

PA Dept. of Environmental Protection

Butler Co. Dept. of Recycling & Waste Management

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