

A Guide to Recycling Electronics

*A Harrison Township Environmental Commission (HTEC) Article
by Dennis Bonanni, HTEC Member*

Did you know that the electronic components inside things like laptop computers and TVs contain hazardous chemicals such as mercury and cadmium that are not good for humans or the environment? Because of this, consumer electronics need to be recycled separately to prevent these toxins from harming humans and contaminating the environment (New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, 2010)ⁱ. This is increasingly important because consumer electronics waste is growing faster than any other type of municipal solid waste (Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions, 2011)ⁱⁱ.

And it's also the law. The New Jersey Electronic Waste Management Act prohibits disposing of computers, monitors, laptops, portable computers and televisions in the garbage as of January 1, 2011 (New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, 2012).ⁱⁱⁱ

E-Waste and E-Cycling

E-Waste is short for Electronic Waste and E-Cycling is the special FREE way to recycle E-Waste.

E-Waste needs to be E-Cycled. Don't put consumer electronics in your township trash or recycling carts. It's not good for the environment or people, and it's against the law.

There are lots of electronic gadgets that contain hazardous chemicals that should be E-Cycled. Here's an example list of common consumer electronic devices that should be E-Cycled:

E-Cycle these Consumer Electronics		
• Laptop / Notebook Computers	• TVs (Flat Screen and Tube)	• Cell Phones and Smart Phones
• Computer Monitors	• Tablets	• E-Readers (e.g. Kindle, Nook)
• Desktop Computers, Keyboards and Mice	• Gaming Consoles (e.g. Xbox, PlayStation, GameCube)	• Handheld Video Game Systems (e.g. Nintendo DS)
• Desktop Printers, Copiers, Scanners, and Fax Machines	• Digital Cameras, Camcorders, and Digital Projectors	• Blu-ray/DVD/CD Players and VCRs
• Computer Hard Disk Drives & External Storage	• iPod/MP3 Digital Music Players	• Clock Radios and Audio/Video Streaming Devices
• Wireless Routers	• GPS Navigation Devices	• Cordless Phones
• Battery Backups – UPS	• Home Entertainment Systems (e.g. A/V Receivers, Amps)	• Just about any consumer electronic device

How to E-Cycle Electronic Gadgets

In Harrison Township, NJ there are a few ways to safely and legally E-Cycle your consumer electronics E-Waste for **FREE**.

Before you sell, donate or E-Cycle, remove all personal information stored on the device (see “Removing Personal Information from Electronic Devices” later in this article).

One of the easiest ways is to call the Harrison Township Trash/Recycling hotline at 856-478-9514 and schedule a curbside pickup. These are scheduled on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, and are the same day as our bulk pickup. Please call no later than 10:00 a.m. the day before to be put on the pickup schedule. Place your E-Waste at your curb no later than 6:00 AM on the day of pickup (Harrison Township, NJ)^{iv}.

Another convenient way to E-Cycle is to take your unwanted consumer electronics to the Township of Harrison Recycling Center located at 151 Colson Lane Mullica Hill NJ 08062. The hours of service are:

- November 1st thru March 31st – Saturday 9 AM – 3 PM, and
- April 1st thru October 31st – Monday & Wednesday 5 PM – 7 PM; Saturday 9 AM – 3 PM (Harrison Township, NJ)^v

Gloucester County residents can also E-Cycle E-Waste at the Gloucester County Solid Waste Complex. The County Solid Waste Complex is located on Monroeville Road (Rt. 694) in South Harrison Township. To get to the Gloucester County Solid Waste Complex (GCSWC) from Harrison Township, follow Rt. 45 South past Friends School. Continue down Rt. 45 South for 3 more miles until you reach Rt. 694. Make a right onto Rt. 694. The GCSWC is a mile down the road on the left (Gloucester County Improvement Authority, 2013)^{vi}.

Computers and other E-Waste may be brought to the GCSWC during normal business hours, 8:30 am to 3:30 pm, Monday - Friday, excluding legal holidays. The Gloucester County Improvement Authority's Office of Recycling recommends calling ahead at 856-478-6045, ext 14, to schedule an E-Waste drop-off (Gloucester County Improvement Authority, 2013)^{vii}. For more information on the Gloucester County Solid Waste Complex, and a list of Saturday hours, visit the website at www.gcianj.com.

If the item you want to E-Cycle is too big to carry to the curb or take to a recycle center, the NJ Department of Environmental Protection recommends contacting the product manufacturer directly or emailing ecycle@dep.state.nj.us for assistance. There may be a pickup fee (New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, 2010)^{viii}.

Other Options for E-Cycling, Trading-in, Selling or Donating

There are other good options to safely and legally E-Cycle, trade-in, sell or donate your unneeded electronic equipment. Just make sure the organization you're working with is certified to handle E-Waste. The EPA encourages all consumers dealing with electronics recyclers and refurbishers, to choose certified recyclers. Currently two accredited certification standards exist: the Responsible Recycling Practices (R2) and the e-Stewards® standards (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2014)^{ix}.

Look for Responsible Recycling Practices (R2) and the e-Stewards® certifications when dealing with electronic recyclers and refurbishers.

Charitable organizations may offer FREE E-Cycling or accept working consumer electronics as donations. The Gloucester County Office of Recycling website mentions FREE E-Cycling at local Goodwill stores. For more information about the Goodwill offer of FREE E-Cycling please visit their website at <http://goodwillnj.org/material-donations/#whattodonate> and click to expand the heading "FREE E-Waste Recycling". The phone number for the Goodwill located in Glassboro, NJ is 856-307-9175.

Most consumer electronics manufactures like HP, Dell, IBM, LG, Sharp and Sony have trade-in and E-Cycling programs. Visit the manufacture's website for information about their specific program.

Another option is to contact a local consumer electronics store and ask them about their trade-in and E-Cycling programs. The Gloucester County Office of Recycling website mentions FREE E-Cycling at local Best Buy stores. Details about the trade-in and E-Cycling offers at Best Buy can be found at their website, <http://www.bestbuy.com/recycling> or by calling or visiting a store.

Staples also offers a trade-in and E-Cycling program. Information about the Staples program is at <https://www.staples.com/sbd/cre/marketing/easy-on-the-planet/recycling-and-eco-services.html>, or call or visit a Staple store.

Amazon, uSell, Gazelle, TechPayout and YouRenew.com are a few sites that offer cash or trade-in credit for used consumer electronics. There are many other companies with similar offers – too many to list in this article. Remember to look for Responsible Recycling Practices (R2) and the e-Stewards® certifications when dealing with these companies.

Even if these companies say they will erase all personal data, the Recycling NJ website, <http://www.recyclingnj.com/recycle/electronics.html> suggests that it's still a good idea to remove all personal information before shipping the device. Recycling NJ goes on further to say,

"We do not recommend for you to sell your electronic devices that have data storage capacity (computers, laptops, cell phones) via ebay, ebay classifieds or craigslist unless you take the correct steps to permanently erase all trace of your personal information."
(Recycling NJ)^x.

Removing Personal Information from Electronic Devices

Before you sell, donate or E-Cycle, remove all personal information stored on the device.

If you aren't familiar with how to remove personal information from your device, contact the wireless carrier or manufacturer's support on the web or by phone. You can also contact the E-Cycling program you plan to use for advice on removing personal data.

The steps to remove personal information are specific to each manufacturer's device and this article doesn't provide that level of detailed information. Instead, here are a few resources and suggested things to consider when removing personal information from electronic devices:

- Follow the instructions provided by you device manufacturer's support on the web
- Use the "Factory Reset" feature if available, to clear any personal data stored on the device
- Use data erasing tools that are available on the web to wipe computer and laptop hard drives
- Delete contacts and data from your phone's memory
- Remove the SIM card from your phone and if you're not reusing the SIM card, cut it in half
- Remove SD Memory cards from Smart phones

ConsumerReports.org has recently published helpful information and a video titled: *"Avoid ID theft and protect personal data when getting rid of a gadget – Don't recycle, trade in, sell, or donate a device without wiping it clean"* on the web at this address,

<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/2013/11/remove-personal-data-from-any-device/index.htm>

(ConsumerReports.org, 2014)^{xi}.

There's also good advice on removing personal information from electronic devices on the Recycling NJ website at <http://www.recyclingnj.com/recycle/electronics.html>. RecyclingNJ.com is run by volunteers and provides a ready source for information about recycling in New Jersey with the purpose of reducing the amount of waste discarded in the general trash.

Sources

The author collected the information in this article from the sources cited and detailed in the endnotes. The information is current as of December 10, 2015.

About the Harrison Township Environmental Commission

The Harrison Township Environmental Commission (HTEC) fosters environmental awareness, understanding and appreciation in order to protect and sustain our municipality's abundant natural resources, which enhance quality of life for our residents. Our goals are to advocate for the long-term protection of Harrison Township's natural resources, to promote public interest in environmental issues, and to be an environmental educational resource for all citizens. Please visit us on the web at

<http://harrisontwp.us/boards-commissions/environmental-commission/>.

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- ⁱ New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. (2010, December 21). *NJDEP E-Cycle - Information for Consumers*. Retrieved February 26, 2014, from New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Website: <http://www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/ewaste/consumers.html>
- ⁱⁱ Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions. (2011, September 1). *E-waste Recycling - ANJEC - "Don't put old computers & TVs in the trash"*. Retrieved February 24, 2014, from Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions Website: www.anjec.org/pdfs/Handouts-EWasteRecycling.pdf
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- ^v Ibid.
- ^{vi} Gloucester County Improvement Authority. (2013). *Welcome to the Gloucester County Improvement Authority's Website - County Recycling - Household Special Waste (Directions to the Facility)*. Retrieved February 25, 2014, from Gloucester County Improvement Authority Website: <http://www.gcianj.com/county-recycling-household-special-waste-gcia-nj.html>
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- ^{xi} ConsumerReports.org. (2014, February). *Wipe Data From Devices Safe Electronics Recycling - Consumer Reports*. Retrieved February 26, 2014, from ConsumerReports.org Website: <http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/2013/11/remove-personal-data-from-any-device/index.htm>