



CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF PLYMOUTH

FACT SHEET

GUIDE NO. 12

YOUR COMPUTER, OUR FUTURE. SAFER ALTERNATIVES FOR DISCARDING YOUR OLD COMPUTERS



Computers contain several pollutants that are harmful to our health and that will affect the health of generations to come yet many end up in the landfill.

WHY WORRY?

According to the U.S. EPA over 250,000,000 home computers became obsolete in 2005 due to ever changing technology. Many of these computers were sent to the landfill.

The problem is that computers contain several pollutants that are harmful to our health and that will affect the health of generations to come. These include:
Cadmium (in resistors & semi conductors)
Lead (in glass panels, soldering in circuit boards)
Mercury (in thermostats, sensors and switches)
Chromium (in steel plates)
Brominated Flame Retardants (on circuit boards, plastic covers and cables)

YOUR OPTIONS...

1. DONATE

If your computer is less than five (5) years old donate it! There are many local organizations that need computers, though many will need to be repaired or upgraded first. This fact sheet lists several non-profit companies who refurbish old computers and give them to these organizations.

Companies Accepting Donations:

JDS Computers Inc.
JDS_computers@hotmail.com
www.jdscomputers.netfirms.com

The Electronics Industry Alliance (www.eia.org) and Computer Education Initiative list several organizations that accept donations.

2. RECYCLE

For computers that are older than five (5) years recycling is the best answer. For Plymouth Township residents this can be accomplished in several ways:

- HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTIONS
Contact the Solid Waste Department for information on the next event.
- LOCAL RETAIL STORES
Most of the retail stores where you purchase computers are now offering return programs. Best Buy, Staples and Office Depot will accept old computers for free recycling or for a small fee. Contact your local store for more information.
- PRIVATE RECYCLERS
A simple web search will turn up several options.

DOES COMPUTER RECYCLING REALLY WORK?



Precious metals commonly found in computers include gold, silver, palladium and platinum as well as aluminum & copper.

Many environmental activists say much of our recycled electronic waste ends up in third-world countries as a pollutant. However, today's market for precious metals

has increased to the extent that the return on the recovery of these precious metals from recycled hard drives has brought a great many U.S. based recyclers into the industry. According to a recent U.S. GAO report, the U.S. Geological Survey estimates that one metric ton of computer circuit boards contain between 40 to 800 times the concentration of gold contained in gold ore while containing less contaminants than gold ore!

FIRST THINGS FIRST...

Before you give your computer away to be recycled or reused **it is very important to clean your hard drive.** According to recent news reports, identity theft is growing at an alarming rate. All computers have important, non-encrypted, sensitive data on them such as passwords, documents, credit card information, emails and web site visit logs. Deleting the files will not remove this sensitive data from your hard drive. You may not have the programming skills or know-how to access deleted data, but there are many, many people who do.

There are several disk cleaning software programs that you can purchase and even obtain for free via the internet. Some of these resources are listed here. For a more complete listing please visit the Charter Township of Plymouth's web site or contact the Solid Waste Department.

DISK CLEANING SOFTWARE

This list is not intended as a recommendation or endorsement of the software and is being provided only to assist you in your research.

Windows Systems:

Programs to purchase:

- Norton Utilities (www.symantec.com/index.jsp)
- System Works (www.symantec.com/index.jsp)

Free programs available at www.shareware.com:

- Kill Disk
- Sure Delete

Macintosh Systems:

Programs to purchase:

- Norton Utilities (www.symantec.com/index.jsp)
- SuperScrubber (www.jiva.com)



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