

### General Information

December 23, 2005 • Vol.27 Issue 51

Page(s) 4 in print issue

## IT Equipment Disposal Services

### Retire Your Old PCs Safely

Did you know that the Environmental Protection Agency considers used CRTs to be hazardous waste? Yes, those old monitors put out to pasture by LCDs can slowly leach toxic metals (such as lead) in quantities above the thresholds EPA considers dangerous. In fact, the landfill disposal of old CRTs is prohibited in some states, notably California. California is a trailblazer in environmental protection issues, so don't be surprised if other states start demanding that businesses pay more in disposal costs to incinerate old CRTs. After all, no one wants toxic lead, mercury, or chromium leaching into groundwater.

#### ■ A Growing Environmental Problem

The pace of innovation in the technology industry guarantees there will always be a steady supply of electronic equipment in need of disposal. Product cycles are now measured in months, so today's hot gadget is tomorrow's toss-away junk. The numbers are staggering: An EPA information page about e-cycling quotes a National Safety Council study predicting the obsolescence and eventual disposal of over 250 million computers in the next five years!

We're also going to be throwing away a lot of cell phones: Approximately 130 million phones will be tossed per year by 2005.

The problem is, indiscriminately throwing away electronic junk can sock Mother Nature with a who's who of environmental bad actors. According to the eWaste Guide Web site, CRT screens, batteries, or printed wiring boards buried in landfills can all leach toxic lead over time. Other harmful metals, such as mercury, hexavalent chromium, cadmium, arsenic, and lithium can leach out of common electronic equipment such as NiCad batteries, tapes or floppy disks, LCDs, alkaline batteries, and mercury switches.

Needless to say, no one wants toxics leaching into neighborhood groundwater from nearby landfills. So the marketplace for IT equipment disposal companies that get rid of your electronic waste will continue to grow in the coming years as businesses large and small grapple with this environmental issue. As more states begin prohibiting disposal of electronic equipment in landfills, alternatives such as incineration or recycling of waste electronic equipment will become more attractive.

As the name implies, incineration means disposal via burning in a high temperature incinerator or kiln. This is the most surefire way to ensure that trusty old CRTs will not become an environmental problem to future generations.

Recycling typically involves destroying old IT equipment to recover valuable materials from the waste. Many of the metals used to make electronic components can be recovered and reused, so recycling is an attractive option.

#### ■ Seller Beware

You have various options for getting rid of old electronics equipment, from outright disposal to recycling. Another type of recycling is the refurbishing and donation of equipment to other parties, such as schools or nonprofit organizations with limited funds. Some disposal companies also resell your old IT equipment and return any profits to you. This is also an attractive alternative because it prolongs the life of the equipment and makes it available to someone else at a reasonable price.

If you're striving to be a good "citizen of the earth" by recycling or reselling your old IT equipment, congratulations are in order. But before reselling or recycling old IT equipment, be sure all data is wiped clean from hard drives, tapes, etc. Not doing so means your confidential business data could wind up in the wrong hands.

Now let's take a look at some companies you can use to dispose of old IT equipment.

### ■ **Recycle America**

The Recycle America Alliance is a nationwide recycler of all types of electronic equipment, including PCs, monitors, servers, storage devices, peripherals, circuit boards, chips, consumer electronics, copiers, phones, fax machines, and other types of electronic equipment. The company operates recycling facilities in Arizona, Minnesota, North Carolina, New Jersey, and Texas and has established alliances with partners in California, Florida, and Massachusetts.

#### ***Recycle America***

*A recycling company for electronics  
and many other types of materials  
with a wide network of disposal  
facilities and partnerships*

[www.recycleamericaalliance.com](http://www.recycleamericaalliance.com)

Recycle America handles used IT equipment in various ways, from equipment recycling for materials recovery to product testing and reuse/resale via marketing services for over 100 commodities and components. The company has an Environmental Stewardship Pledge that states various guarantees, including the processing of all electronics in the United States, the tracking of all products received and processed, and oversight of secondary processors and end-market vendors via frequent Environmental, Health, and Safety auditing.

According to the company, e-cycling services are provided for a variety of customers, including

Fortune 500 enterprises; small to medium-sized enterprises; local, state, and federal government agencies; OEMs; retailers; and solid waste and recycling companies. For example, Recycle America has a partnership with Waste Management, the solid waste disposal behemoth.

### ■ **Retire-IT**

Retire-IT provides all facets of the IT equipment recycling cycle, such as transporting your equipment, destroying all data, testing and inspecting equipment, remarketing or reuse, and

final recycling.

**Retire-IT**

*Handles the three Rs of IT equipment disposal: retirement, remarketing, and recycling*

[www.retire-it.com](http://www.retire-it.com)

The company provides next-day pickups, performs onsite equipment packing, and ensures equipment is securely transported per established shipping regulations. In terms of data removal, Retire-IT personnel apply hard drive erasing methodologies that are compliant with Department of Defense data destruction standards so when your equipment is sold, you can rest assured your confidential data won't travel with it. Hard drives that are tested and determined to be inoperable are destroyed so there is no chance to recover data from them.

Retire-IT inspects and tests all electronic equipment to determine its resale value. The company remarkets resalable equipment through various channels, from online stores to auction sites and value added resellers.

When equipment is determined to be unusable, Retire-IT recycles the equipment in accordance with all state and federal regulations governing the disposal of electronic equipment. When recycling is complete, the company issues a Certificate of Destruction for all recycled equipment.

**■ Computer Recycling USA**

As we've discussed, landfilling of used electronic equipment is already prohibited by some states, notably California. CRUSA (Computer Recycling USA) features a zero landfill policy that ensures your old equipment won't end up in the neighborhood landfill.

**Computer Recycling USA**

*With locations from coast to coast and in Canada, CRUSA can provide a customized pickup program to service multiple locations*

[www.computerrecyclingusa.com](http://www.computerrecyclingusa.com)

As with the other companies in this roundup, CRUSA has the ability to provide the transportation and logistics for your used computer equipment. The company specializes in providing e-cycling services for businesses that need to manage electronics recycling programs at multiple locations. For example, CRUSA can develop a customized pickup program for multiple locations that minimizes transportation costs and fits your business needs.

CRUSA also packages and palletizes all equipment onsite; in addition, the company can manage all aspects of a disposal project at your site, from evaluation of materials to be picked up to removal and coordination of all disposal services. When equipment has resale value, CRUSA either remarkets the equipment or donates it to nonprofit organizations. The company works with processing facilities to process equipment with no resale value by removing commodities such as plastic, metals, or glass in accordance with all local, state, and federal regulations.

Finally, CRUSA provides clients with "customizable platforms of protection" that provide legal and financial protection for clients.

**■ Dispose Of Equipment Responsibly**

As electronic waste proliferates, the need to dispose of old electronic equipment in an environmentally responsible manner that protects your business from the inadvertent loss of confidential data will only increase in the coming years. In this roundup, we only take a look at a small number of IT equipment disposal companies; in today's marketplace, there are hundreds of operators promising to take electronic equipment from your hands.

As you get ready to select an IT equipment disposal or recycling vendor, keep one key fact in

mind: No matter what the vendor guarantees, the appropriate disposition of your used electronic equipment is ultimately and always your responsibility. ■

by Sixto Ortiz Jr.

## Buying Tips

Here are some tips to consider when purchasing IT equipment disposal services (Source: "Five IT Disposal Mistakes Not to Make," Retire-IT, 2005)

- **Separate transportation from IT disposal.** According to Retire-IT, you should assign the transportation of used IT equipment destined for final disposal to a transportation company separate from the disposal vendor. This ensures you can maintain oversight over the transport process and avoid potential problems.
- **Audit shipping reports.** Retire-IT recommends that all shipping reports be audited to verify that IT equipment arrived at its ultimate destination. This is especially important for small electronic items, such as laptops.
- **Verify data security.** Be sure to choose a vendor that is willing to let you periodically audit its data destruction procedures. Even though a vendor guarantee might exist, it's important to "trust but verify."
- **Define indemnification upfront.** Retire-IT recommends that businesses understand the indemnification mechanisms vendors provide for protecting clients from potential liabilities. The company recommends asking vendors about previous problems and how they were resolved, and make sure contracts specifically state what protections the vendor provides.
- **Audit settlement reports.** Finally, it's important to audit settlement reports from equipment resale activities to verify whether you are getting maximum value for your used equipment.

---

Copyright © 2005 Sandhills Publishing Company U.S.A. All rights reserved.