



Old electronic equipment: too valuable for the rubbish!



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CONGRATULATIONS!



You are now a raw material supplier, as the new law on handling of waste from electronic equipment (implementation of the WEEE- Directive in Germany) is now in force. The amount of households with electronic equipment has been growing over the years. Sooner or later every appliance, even the most modern, becomes scrap, but nevertheless valuable. For example: with 14 tons of old electronic appliances one can produce approximately one ton of copper. Up to now these appliances ended up in landfills much too often. To produce the same amount of metal from mining, one would need to move 1000 tons of rock.

The utilization of old appliances provides useful raw materials.

Therefore:

... the European WEEE was transposed into German law and implemented on March, 24 in 2006. It says that all old electronic equipment must be collected separately from other waste and it can then be delivered free of charge at any time to municipal collecting points.

In any case you are not allowed to dispose them with other household waste. That applies to all devices, including washing machines, hoovers, computers, shavers, mp3-player, fluorescent light tubes and energy saving lamps. All these every day products with heavy metals like lead, cadmium and mercury have proved to be a greater burden on waste disposal than other waste types.

It is required by law to separate and collect at least 4 kg of old electronic equipment per person every year in average. However this is still less than what is accumulated every year. As far as devices or parts of them cannot be re-used, at least 50 to 80 percent must be recycled.

Labeling of all new appliances

All new household appliances will have the symbol of a crossed out garbage can displayed. This symbol is an instruction that these appliances are to be disposed of separately to other household waste.



Re-use: also used appliances can be useful again

At constantly decreasing intervals new electronic products are put on the market. These products become quickly obsolete, although it is a shame to throw them away. Give them to friends, second hand shops, recycling initiatives or to charitable organizations. You get further information from your city council or local community group.

The inappropriate disposal of old electronic equipment endangers both people and the environment

Many electronic devices consist of more than 1.000 different substances. Besides valuable raw materials such as copper or aluminum, they include materials which endanger the environment and health such as cadmium, lead, mercury or certain flame retardants. Since July 2006, these substances can only be used in a limited way in new appliances. Old appliances that become quickly obsolete can contain a great deal of dangerous material.





Refrigerant medium endanger the earth's ozone layer

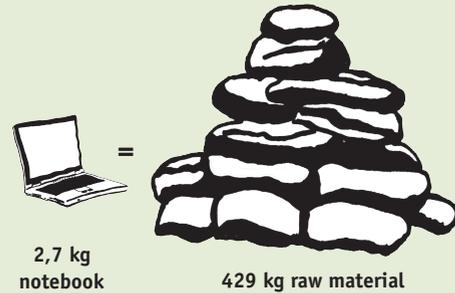
Cooling appliances require refrigerant medium. Such mediums (containing CFC) endanger the ozone layer to a large extent. In new appliances these materials can no longer be used, although they can still be found in many old appliances. Such cooling devices need to be dealt with in a controlled way so that these harmful substances do not escape into the atmosphere. The CFCs are disposed of separately. Metals and plastics are recycled.



Computer devices and consumer electronics – variety of valuable and dangerous materials

In computers, laptops, hi-fis and mobiles you can find many valuable precious metals like aluminum, copper, zinc or nickel in addition to many high-quality plastics. The separate collection of electronic equipment enables the recycling of such materials.

The picture shows the amount of raw-materials which are needed to produce a laptop. A laptop weighs only 2,7 kg, but requires 429 kg of raw material in its production. **If old appliances are recycled, the production of new appliances can save up to 75 percent of the required raw materials.** That applies not only to laptops.



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Apart from the valuable material one must also separate the harmful material such as the mercury lights behind the display, the battery and circuit boards.

Television and computer monitors need special care

These appliances contain lead and other heavy metals. They are fragile and need to be disposed of separately. The individual parts can then be used to produce new monitors.



Small, but not to be underestimated: household appliances, tools, games ...

Small household appliances are the items which fit into every household bin. These include hairdryers, gameboys and drilling machines. For example in an old toaster you can still find cancer-causing asbestos. Old irons and kettles often contain mercury components. The circuit boards in gameboys contain flame retardants. These appliances need to be collected and handled separately to other household waste.



Attention: fluorescent light tubes

Fluorescent tubes and energy saving lamps use little energy, provide much light and last a long time. But hey contain small amounts of mercury. Therefore the old tubes should be separated from other waste and collected undamaged so that no toxic mercury particles escape into the atmosphere. Only then the mercury can be removed correctly and the glass can be recycled.



You can help!

Bring your old electronic equipment to separate collection points.

You can get further information on the collection of old electronic equipment from your local council or community group.



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