

Nonprofit: Liers recycling more e-waste

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Recycling old electronic gadgets still isn't as simple as hauling empty bottles out to the curb on trash day.

But six months after a New York e-waste law went into effect, electronics recyclers here say business is booming -- and some Long Island towns are saving money on the service, too.

The law requires manufacturers to take back old computer equipment, TVs and small electronics such as gaming consoles for recycling or reuse, at little or no cost to most consumers.

The intent is twofold: to keep lead, mercury and other toxic materials inside those items out of landfills and incinerators, and to shift recycling costs to the firms that produce the goods.

The new requirements have triggered a 50 percent jump in the volume of e-waste coming to AHRC Nassau, a nonprofit serving the developmentally disabled that has an IT equipment-dismantling program.

"Some schools have basements that are filled floor to ceiling with dusty old printers and monitors," said Karleen Haines, group director of vocational services. "They have options now."

The recycling process still requires some legwork from consumers to figure exactly how and where to dispose of their discards. The Consumer Electronics Association has set up a website, grenergadgets.org, where people can punch in a ZIP code to find the nearest recycling site.

Best Buy and Office Depot offer an in-store drop-off service. Nintendo and Oracle offer mailback programs. Many others -- including Canon, Panasonic and Kyocera -- have turned to third-party recycling services that organize local e-waste collection events.

AHRC Nassau partners with Westchester electronics recycler WeRecycle, which collects for Apple and processes items from local Goodwill stores. They also have contracts with Southold and Babylon towns, and the village of Lynbrook.

Eighty-one of about 100 manufacturers affected by the law have set up recycling programs, said Mark Moroukian of the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

Figures on how much has been recycled won't be available until March, but consumers are emptying their closets, he said.

"I have manufacturers calling me every day and saying, 'Can we stop collecting now?' because they've collected twice as much as they are supposed to," Moroukian said.

That quota, based on market share, has been a boon for municipalities that were already recycling residents' e-waste.

The Town of Hempstead used to pay E-Scrap Destruction of Islandia about \$2,000 per e-waste collection, plus \$550 every few weeks to haul away a 30 cubic-yard container.

"Now the price is gone, the disposal cost is gone, and we anticipate that next year we'll be getting paid for it," said sanitation Commissioner Lou DiGrazie.

In Oyster Bay, the e-waste law helped the town renegotiate its contract with a Vermont recycler, saving an estimated \$100,000, officials said.

The next provision takes effect Jan. 1, when businesses and trash haulers will be prohibited from dumping e-waste in landfills or incinerators.

For consumers, there's still a learning curve. The e-waste program came as a surprise to Lee Fine, a Melville attorney who was shopping Friday at the Best Buy in Huntington Station.

"First I ever heard of it," he said. "Whatever old computers we have get left at the curb and it disappears."

Recycling e-waste

Under New York's law, manufacturers must take back old electronics for recycling and reuse.

The law covers:

Televisions and cathode-ray tubes (used in older TVs and monitors).

Computers, small servers and computer peripherals (cables, keyboards, mice)

Small-scale fax machines, printers and scanners (less than 100 pounds)

VCRs, DVD players, DVRs, cable boxes and satellite receivers.

Electronic or video game consoles, and portable digital music players

Services, fees:

Fees may apply to larger businesses (50 or more employees) and nonprofits (75 or more).

Take-back programs may charge for extra services, such as data wiping or at-home collection