

Easy to recycle electronic waste responsibly

By Molly Wood, New York Times

Maybe you replaced old electronics over the holidays or you're just sweeping out the old and ushering in the New Year. Either way, you'll need to do something with your old devices. For everyone's sake, including Mother Nature's, try to get rid of your old technology the right way.

Recycling electronics is becoming easier by the day. Stores like Best Buy and Staples now offer programs to take back old gadgets and recycle them. Churches and schools commonly hold e-waste collection drives, and you can even occasionally find bins for dropping off old tech on the street.

Still, most old gadgets end up in the trash. Americans alone throw away 2 million to 3 million tons of electronics yearly, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. With the life span of devices shrinking – the average phone is replaced every 18 months – the problem keeps growing worse.

The toxic waste from all those tossed gadgets causes terrible damage to soil, water and people. The Blacksmith Institute, a nonprofit organization that focuses on solving global pollution problems, estimates that so-called toxic e-waste threatens the health of 100 million people worldwide. And the United Nations Environment Program calls electronic waste the “fastest growing waste stream in the world.”

The solution is not just recycling. It's to be sure that you're recycling with a responsible processor. Some programs do little more than pass the load to unverified operators that then toss loads of e-waste into increasingly toxic dumps around the world.

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