

Recyclers' Corner



September 2012 Issue

[Editor's Note: Recyclers' Corner is a periodic news column sponsored by Denver Recycles, a program of Denver Public Works/Solid Waste Management. It includes updates on seasonal and ongoing activities related to the City and County of Denver's recycling programs. Editors are invited to publish all or part of the column; however, we request that you run major edits by our staff to ensure accuracy of the information. Questions may be directed to Becky Goyton or Tom Strickland at Denver Recycles, 303-446-3557.]

Recycling Your Old Clothing

A great way to benefit your community, the environment and even your wallet is by recycling your used clothing, linens and other textiles. All types of fibers (fleece, flannel, corduroy, cotton, nylon, denim, wool, etc.) are recyclable and in demand. *Did you know that 85% of all clothing ends up in the garbage and more than 9 million tons of textiles end up in landfills each year?* Help keep textiles out of the trash by recycling them.

One way to recycle your old clothing is by **donating it to charities**, such as Goodwill or the Salvation Army. These organizations will accept items in any condition. Donated clothes that are still wearable are either sold in a retail store to help raise funds for the charity or given away to needy individuals and families in the community. Items not suitable for reuse or resale are often sent to textile recyclers where clothing is "de-manufactured" into fabrics that can be worked into new materials, such as cleaning rags, car insulation and seat stuffing. Cotton items can even be recycled into new paper. Used clothing and textiles are also shipped overseas where they are in high demand from less developed countries.



You can benefit financially by recycling your old clothes. Donated items can be counted as a **tax deduction**, so be sure to get a receipt when making your donation and save a few dollars on your tax returns. You can also **sell your old clothes for cash or store credit** to local or online retail shops. Consignment shops and thrift stores specialize in finding a second life for clothes that still have some fashion value. Those old, striped pants in the back of your closet just might be the missing piece in someone else's wardrobe.

It is important to consider the **environmental benefits of recycling** as we continue to discard clothing ever more quickly. On average, each American throws away 68 pounds of clothes a year. Reclaiming clothing and other textile fibers avoids many of the polluting and energy-intensive processes needed when manufacturing textiles from raw materials. Unlike virgin materials, recycled textiles don't need to be re-dyed or scoured and require much less water to process the fibers into their final form.

Environmental awareness among clothing manufactures is increasing, and many retailers are now taking back their own products for recycling. For example, The Gap will take back blue jeans for recycling and Patagonia will take back their own clothes for recycling at their stores, outlets such as REI, or by mail. You can even get value points on future purchases at some retail stores when you recycle with them.

For a list of local options for donating clothing, visit Denver Recycles online at www.DenverGov.org/RecyclingDirectory.

###

Free and Low-Cost Electronics Recycling for Denver Residents

Are you tired of that old computer taking up valuable storage space in your closet or wondering what to do with that broken VCR? Then it is time for you to take action and recycle your electronic items. Luckily, there are both free and low-cost options for recycling televisions, monitors, computers and other electronics in Denver.



If your electronics are fairly new and in good working condition, then you may want to first consider reuse options before recycling. Many thrift stores accept electronics in good working condition, while some organizations refurbish donated computers and provide them to qualified nonprofits and schools. A list of local organizations accepting electronics donations is available at www.DenverGov.org/RecyclingDirectory.

Retail stores, such as **Best Buy** and **Staples**, offer **free electronics recycling**. At no charge, Best Buy will accept tube televisions with screens up to 32 inches in height and flat-panel televisions that are 60 inches or smaller in size. No purchase is necessary. In addition, Best Buy will take monitors, DVD players, audio and video cables, cell phones and other electronics. Staples also offers free recycling drop-off for desktop computers, laptops, monitors, printers, shredders, UPS & GPS devices, computer peripherals, mobile phones and digital cameras. Staples will accept all brands, but there is a limit of 6 items per customer per day and they do not accept televisions, appliances, stereo equipment, alkaline batteries, and certain other electronics. Check first with either store on their guidelines before bringing them your electronics.

Denver Recycles, in partnership with Metech Recycling, offers residents an **E-cycle Coupon** for recycling old televisions, monitors and other electronic items at a substantially discounted rate. Residents will need to bring their electronics to Metech Recycling in Northwest Denver during normal working hours and present the coupon on arrival. To request an E-cycle coupon, go online to www.DenverGov.org/ecycle or call 311. This program is only for residents living in the City & County of Denver and there is a limit of one coupon per home per year.

Properly recycling electronics is very important. **Electronics contain a variety of harmful, substances that can pose risks to our health and the environment when put in the trash.** For example, CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) televisions and monitors contain an average of 4 to 8 pounds of lead each and flat panel televisions, laptops and monitors are made with mercury-containing lamps. Even some cords and cables contain significant amounts of lead and cadmium. It's important to recycle these materials, so we can reduce our need to mine or extract more of the natural resources used to make electronics. While there are valuable materials contained within electronic waste, the cost to safely dismantle this equipment into the various materials is labor intensive and expensive, especially for televisions and monitors. As a consumer, it is your responsibility to ask questions about how your waste will be recycled and handled to ensure a company's business practices meet your satisfaction.

For more information on electronics recycling, visit www.DenverGov.org/ecycle.

###