

Healthy Electronics for Safer Child Care

What to avoid, what to use, and how to recycle it



Electronics use many hazardous materials and are not designed to be easily recycled. They are required to be flame resistant, leading some product makers to treat their products with chemicals to meet this requirement. Electronics may also contain toxic metals like lead and mercury. These chemicals can poison our air and water, and make us sick. Products quickly become outdated and are replaced with newer models. Improper recycling and disposal of old products can expose people, water, and wildlife to lead, mercury, or toxic flame retardants.

What to Avoid:

Brominated and Chlorinated Flame Retardants: Chemical flame retardants are present in virtually all our homes and bodies. They have been detected in house dust, blood, and breast milk. Chemical flame retardants have been shown to cause harm to the thyroid system and lifelong damage to the developing brain. According to the EPA, some brominated and chlorinated flame retardants probably cause cancer. New York, California, several other states, and the European Union have banned some older flame retardants, such as pentaBDE, but decaBDE is still used in some household products, especially electronics. Flame retardants in recycled plastic from old computers and TVs can contaminate new products.

E-waste: Electronics are now the fastest growing type of trash. It is important to ensure electronics are recycled correctly; irresponsible recyclers sometimes use children in developing countries or prison laborers to dismantle electronics, providing little or no safety protections from toxic chemicals. **Use the information on the reverse page to make sure you choose a safe, registered recycler and/or collection site that is certified to properly recycle e-waste.**

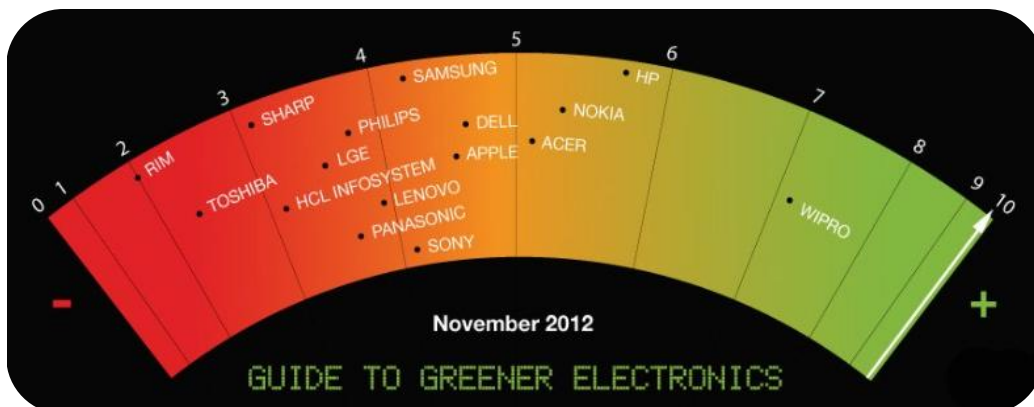


PVC: Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) coats the wires in many electronics. When burned to collect the valuable copper inside, the PVC releases dioxins. Dioxins cause cancer and do not easily break down.

Heavy Metals: Lead, mercury, and other heavy metals are used in TV components, flat-panel displays, and computer circuit boards. These toxic metals are especially dangerous to people melting down parts from old equipment in unsafe working conditions.

What Can I Do?

- **Choose companies that make safer products.** Find a company that minimizes chemical use and provides a take-back program. Before you buy, call to ask how they meet flammability standards.
- **Dust regularly and wash your hands** to avoid buildup of PBDEs and other chemicals.
- **Use free take-back programs.**



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Remember - buying new may not be best!

*Can you extend the life of your existing products with a software or hardware upgrade?
Will a used or refurbished product meet your needs?*



New York State Requirements

New York requires electronics makers to take back their products free at retail stores, drop off sites, or by mail. This has encouraged product makers to design less toxic products, helped to reduce pollution, and increased awareness of this health and safety issue. **In 2015, it will be illegal to dispose of most electronics in landfills.**

Collection Sites: The DEC maintains a list of hundreds of collection sites in NY, including retail stores, municipalities, and resale shops. Call ahead to make sure they accept your equipment. The law

excludes some electronics, like telephones.

Recycling Facilities: New York has more than 50 registered electronic waste recycling facilities that accept, store, and recycle electronic waste. More information at: www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/65583.html

For More Information:

- *The Electronics TakeBack Coalition maintains a comprehensive site with links to company ratings, product registries, and more. Check it out: www.electronicstakeback.org/tools-for-purchasers*
- *Find out where and how to recycle almost anything: www.earth911.com*
- *NYS DEC Guidance for Consumers: www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/66872.html*
- *Learn more about the health and environmental impacts from global trade in e-waste: www.ban.org*
- *Chart above available at: www.greenpeace.org/international/en/Guide-to-Greener-Electronics*

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Created by Clean & Healthy New York, 62 Grand St, Albany NY 12207
518-641-1552, info@cleanhealthyny.org, www.cleanhealthyny.org