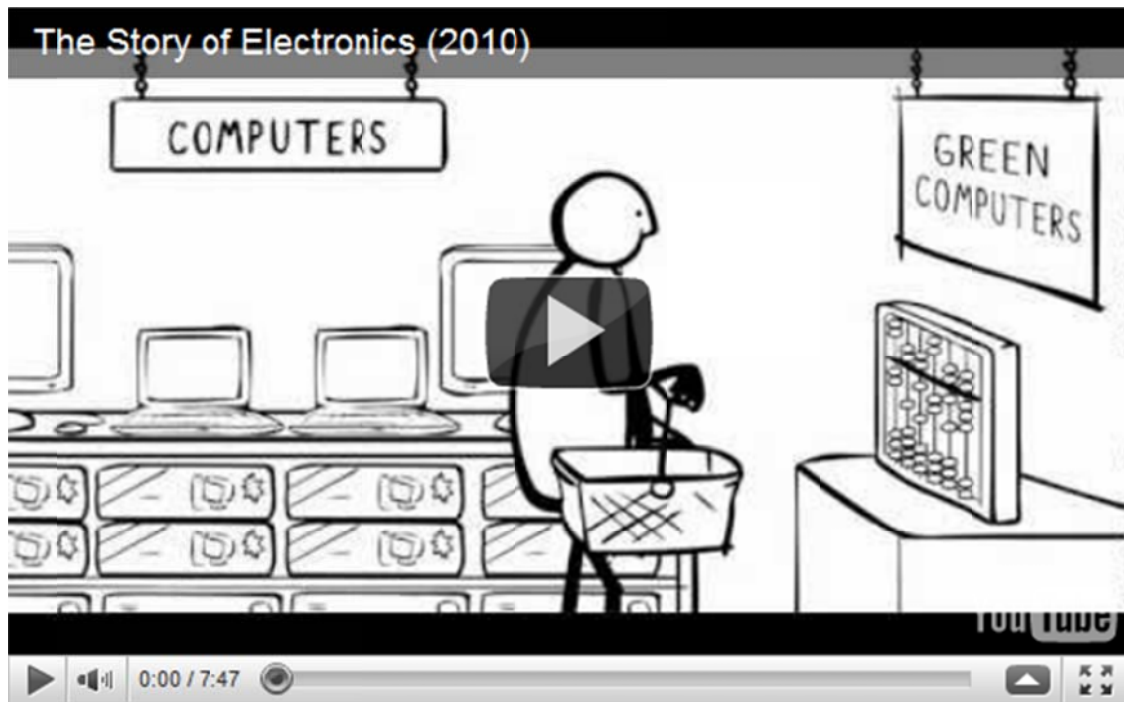


Los Angeles Times

Recycling electronic waste: Earth Day resolution?

April 21, 2011



Each year, Americans throw out 400 million units of high-tech trash – and they’re on track to toss another 50 billion over the next decade, according to a study released just before Earth Day.

Constant upgrades caused by improving technology and plunging prices are creating millions of pounds of e-waste according to a report from policy center Demos. The products are often potentially toxic, containing lead, mercury, chromium, zinc and other hazardous materials.

Of the throwaways, most are sent to dumps and incinerators. Less than 15% are recycled — and then usually through voluntary “take back” programs or processed in developing countries using unsafe methods, according to the study.

To illustrate its point, Demos's study with co-released with the above video from [activist Annie Leonard](#), The Story of Stuff Project, Electronics TakeBack Coalition and Free Range Studios.

Other activists from the Basel Action Network and elsewhere say that many of the thousands of collection sites around the country refuse to divulge where they send products to be recycled.

But some collectors, such as Tustin-based All Green Electronics Recycling, make a point of processing all the waste — more than 100 million pounds a month — domestically.

Electronics Recyclers International in Fresno has a 900-horsepower tech-trash shredding system that can gobble up 20,000 pounds an hour. The company's founder also launched 1800-recycling.com, which directs customers to local recycling centers.

In California, there are more than a dozen ecoATMs, automated self-serve machines that can identify and buy back used electronics directly from consumers.

And recently, the electronics industry has been eager to tout its recycling cred.

Dell said it diverted more than 150 million pounds of electronics — nearly two-thirds from the Americas — from landfills in fiscal year 2011. The program invites consumers to drop off old computers, monitors, printers, scanners and more at Goodwill donation sites.

Best Buy said that its in-store recycling kiosks gathered nearly 7 million pounds of e-waste in California — about 52,000 pounds per store.

Nationwide, the Consumer Electronics Assn. said it hoped to recycle a billion pounds of e-waste a year by 2016 — about three times more than the 2010 amount and enough to fill a 71,000-seat stadium.

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