



Hitting the Recycle Button

By Trey Granger on October 6th, 2008

Pop quiz: what is the fastest growing sector of the electronics industry?

Cell phones? Wrong number.

Televisions? Adjust your picture.

Personal computers? Error 404.

If you said video game consoles, then get ready to warp to the next level. There were over **60 million consoles** sold last year alone, according to John Shegerian, Chairman and CEO of [Electronic Recyclers International](#), and they contain many of the same harmful materials as the electronics mentioned above.

Powering Up the System

Much of the attention for [electronics recycling](#) focuses on computers and televisions. Video game consoles get lumped into “personal electronics,” or some similar term, by many e-waste recyclers.

Consoles also receive less attention from manufacturers when it comes to recycling. In [Greenpeace’s annual ranking of green electronics](#) that rates manufacturers on the use of toxic materials and recycling measures, Microsoft and Nintendo scored the lowest.

These companies represent two thirds of the “Big Three” of video game console production, although the third company, Sony, ranked second highest on Greenpeace’s list. One of the major reasons cited for low scores for Microsoft and Nintendo was the lack of recycling options provided.

“These products get discarded at an alarming rate as modern advances in gaming technology continue to present us with better games,” said Shegerian. “More often than not, these consoles are not recycled responsibly and contribute to our e-waste stream.”

Choose Your Character

So what is the harm in adding a few consoles to landfills? According to Shegerian, video game consoles contain some of the most hazardous chemicals used in the electronics industry.

This includes [polyvinyl chloride \(PVC\)](#), [phthalates](#), beryllium, bromine and [lead](#). Keep in mind that consoles have motherboards just like your computer, which is where several of these are found.

While game players are not affected by these materials, they can cause health issues for scrap yard workers as well as leach these toxins into soil and water when landfilled.

Alternate Ending

One thing to consider is that working video game consoles and games [can be reused](#) instead of recycled or landfilled. You can find electronic retailers that will give you cash or store credit for bringing in your old system. Just remember that there's no reset button to push once your video game equipment ends up in a landfill.

You can get a high score with the environment by finding out where to [recycle video game consoles](#) using Earth911.

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