



ONLINE GUY: E-recycler sees pieces of prosperity in obsolete gadgets

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By Al Gibes

One question I get often is, "How do I get rid of my old computer?" I finally have a good answer. And it applies to just about any type of electronic waste.

I tell people to head to their new computer and visit 1800recycling.com to begin the quest to safely ditch old gizmos. They can also call the toll-free number that comprises the domain name. The site has many "green" features, including a ZIP code- or city-based database of recycling centers for all recyclables.

"Most people learn they shouldn't throw electronics away and a lot of them want to do the right thing," said John Shegerian, president and CEO of Electronic Recyclers International, which operates 1800Recycling. "Electronic waste is the fastest growing waste stream in the world."

The Fresno, Calif., company operates in seven cities across the country. It handled 18 million pounds of electronics in April. That's a massive jump from its first month of operation five years ago, when 10,000 pounds of old electronics were processed.

"Seven years ago there was no e-waste industry," he said. The key to growing the industry, and keeping discarded waste "above ground" and not in landfills, are laws that prohibit burying certain materials. "We need to educate the politicians so they understand that being green is good, no matter what side of the aisle they're on. Landfill bans have to happen first."

Shegerian said his company breaks e-waste into commodities. Nothing is illegally exported and no electronics end up in landfills. The Electronic Recyclers site (www.electronicrecyclers.com) includes a map of states with landfill bans.

"Electronics are filled with hazardous materials, like mercury, lead, cadmium, palladium, platinum, arsenic and other metals," he said. "If we keep this stuff above ground and handle it right and we can commoditize it. We've become the new urban miners of the world."

The company works with many businesses that provide drop-off points for electronic waste. Items being recycled include televisions, monitors, laptops, keyboards, mice, stereo equipment, servers, cell phones, digital video disc players, light bulbs, batteries and all office electronics.

The company uses shredders, bailers and compactors to separate the goods and ship them to smelters for reprocessing.

Expect to pay a small fee for proper recycling, Shegerian said.

"People pay anywhere from 10 to 40 cents a pound, depending on the materials," he said.

"There's still a bunch of bad recycling going on.

A telltale sign is companies advertising themselves as free recyclers. Eighty-five percent of recyclers of electronic waste are still doing it the wrong way. They're 'stacking and packing,' sending it to China or India."

Original Article:

<http://www.lvrj.com/business/e-recycler-sees-pieces-of-prosperity-in-obsolete-gadgets-96240244.html>