

Stop and Think before You Discard those old computers

By Barbara brown



Companies and individuals often store away their old computers thinking perhaps they may have a use someday. Or, they store them because it is too much trouble to find a worthy recipient or reputable recycling center. Some people even throw them away. The computers that are thrown away present a significant environmental hazard. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has estimated that 45 million computers will become obsolete annually and that seventy percent of the heavy metals in U.S. garbage dumps are from electronics. Most of the environmental concerns with disposed computers result from the four to five pounds of lead in the monitor. But the computer itself also contains mercury, cadmium, and chromium – all of which present health risks through their impact on air and water.

Dell Corporation, the largest seller of computers, is committed to a zero-landfill policy and has created an aggressive set of programs to keep old computers from entering our landfills. Although Dell is based in the small town of Round Rock, Texas it has world-wide operations. Their environmentally friendly programs include donating working computers and recycling computers for parts and components. Dell strives to make this recycling as painless as possible for individuals and companies.

For individuals, **Dell Recycling** will help in donating your old computer to the National Cristina Foundation that supports disabled and economically disadvantaged children and adults in your own community. The foundation will pick up your computer at your door and put it to good use in your community. Or, if you choose to recycle, Dell offers an environmentally friendly method to dispose of outdated computer equipment that no longer has useful life. Dell is happy to accept any brand of computer, keyboard, mouse, monitor or printer. And, Dell will pick it up at your home.

For organizations with many computers to be removed, **Dell Asset Recovery and Recycling** services provide the logistic and disposal capabilities to recover and dispose of owned and/or leased computer equipment in a secure and environmentally safe way. Along with removing identifying tags and labels, the hard drive of each system is overwritten to help protect the security of data. Dell then recycles 100% of the computer by breaking down the components into primary parts with materials separated into groups of ferrous metals, precious metals and plastics. Once divided, these materials are then sent to specific partners who specialize in the disposal of each unique material. In 2005, Dell recovered 29.9 million kilograms of hardware for our customers worldwide.

How are we doing? The EPA's news release from Jan. 10, 2007 reported that electronics manufacturers, including Dell, recycled more than 34 million pounds of electronics in 2006 as part of the EPA's Plug-In To eCycling program. As a result of Plug-In partner recycling efforts, energy savings equal to the energy needed to

power over 7,000 U.S. homes and prevented greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to annual emissions from 12,000 cars.