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Computers ready for recycling at an event at Olympia High School, in Olympia, WA
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[Washington State Starts Free Electronics Recycling Program](#)

Residents can recycle their PCs and TV sets

Environment-friendly computer users in Washington now have a reason to rejoice - some 200 permanent recycle centers for old computers and television sets will be opened in their area starting January 2009. The centers will be operated free of charge, and everyone will be able to drop off their electronics devices. However, authorities ask people purchasing new TVs and PCs during the holidays not to come at the centers all at once after New Year, so as to avoid long queues.

These equipments have some components that incorporate highly-toxic compounds, such as mercury and cadmium, which can pollute the soil in landfills for many years, if disposed of improperly. Ecologists say that recycle centers are the only way to keep these chemicals off the land, as special processes could ensure their complete capture. Furthermore, these metals could be used once again, in the creation of more advanced computers and TV sets.

Seventeen other US states have this type of regulation in place, but Washington will be among the first to actually implement it at such a wide scale. State officials take great pride in their initiative and say that the bill, which was passed in 2006, forces manufacturers to assume responsibility for the safe withdrawal of the products they place on the market. "Our law is a true producer responsibility law. It puts the onus of the financing on the manufacturer," says Miles Kuntz, the state's electronic products recycling program manager.

Estimates place the amount of recycled material in the first year alone at about 25 million pounds, which, on average, means about 4 pounds per person. However, there is no way of knowing for sure just how many PCs and TVs will be brought to the various collecting centers. Producers, such as Sony, Dell, and Hewlett-Packard, have to have at least one center in every county, and one in each city with more than 10,000 inhabitants.

Leaded glass, plastics, aluminum, mercury, seep lead, and other chemicals will be extracted from the abandoned electronics, by processors approved by the state's Department of Ecology, including Total Reclaim of Seattle and IMS Electronics Recycling of Vancouver.