

Dispose of unwanted electronics at Southwest Valley recycling day

by **David Madrid** - Jan. 26, 2011 09:33 AM
The Arizona Republic

The call is out in the Southwest Valley for electronic waste.

If you want to get rid of that old computer but are afraid your information could be accessed, now is your chance to be rid of it and have the lingering information destroyed.

If you have TVs, cellphones, batteries and other electronics, don't put them in landfills; let the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality take them off your hands at a free electronics-waste-recycling event.

Avondale, Goodyear, Litchfield Park, Tolleson, Littleton Elementary School District, Estrella Mountain Community College and E-Waste Harvesters of Phoenix are partnering with ADEQ to accept unwanted electronic items from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, in Parking Lot G of Estrella Mountain Community College, 3000 N. Dysart Road, Avondale.

Lot G is the northwest parking lot. You don't have to be a Southwest Valley resident to drop off electronic waste.

"This is a massive problem when you look at it. It's 2 million tons a year being produced nationally," Mark Shaffer, a spokesman for ADEQ, said of the growing problem of disposing of the electrical products.

He said 26 states either ban e-waste in landfills or have programs to control the waste. Arizona has no such programs. A bill, which went nowhere in the Legislature last year, would have mandated manufacturers take back electronic merchandise when it reaches the end of its life.

Shaffer said e-waste is filling landfills at an alarming **rate** with more being illegally dumped than ever before throughout the undeveloped parts of the state.

Two years ago, the Legislature cut nearly \$2 million in recycling-related **money** annually from ADEQ, so the environmental quality department is holding collection events in an effort to control the e-waste. It has collected more than 650,000 pounds in 26 events.

Shaffer said many people either are afraid to get rid of their computers because they fear their information could fall into the wrong hands, or they put it on the sidewalk and hope for the best.

"That's like sticking your credit card out there and giving all your personal stuff on the hard drive," he said. "The company that we partner with, they destroy the hard drives

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and they use Department of Defense software to really get at it."

E-Waste Harvesters will erase all hard drives, and the company recycles the materials in accordance with state and federal regulations.

Shaffer said this is the first major, **aggressive** effort to collect electronic waste in the Southwest Valley.

Electronic devices such as computers and cellphones contain 40 to 60 chemical elements, including precious and heavy metals and persistent organic compounds and carcinogens that pose risks to human health and the environment if not treated appropriately.

That is why participation in the recycling event is so important, Shaffer said.

"There have been small events, but nothing on the regional scale," he said. "We're going to try to do a lot of quantity there, and we're really hopeful that we're going to do well."

Companies and individuals donating e-waste may choose to receive a certificate of disposal for their records from E-Waste Harvesters.

"This is a great opportunity for people in the region to dispose of all the unwanted electronics they have collected over the years while at the same time ensuring that this potentially toxic stream of waste is disposed of responsibly and does not take up valuable landfill space," said Henry Darwin, ADEQ acting director.

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