

## Ripple Effect #31

### **ELECTRONICS RECYCLING**

Many of you probably received a new telephone, radio, clock, TV, computer or cell phone for Christmas. But now what should you do with the old item your gift is replacing?

Those items make up the bulk of electronics threatening the environment because of dangerous elements in them. There are hazardous materials – such as lead, mercury and hexavalent chromium – in circuit boards, batteries and color cathode ray tubes (CRTs). Depending on size and brand, TVs and CRT monitors contain an average of four pounds of lead. Mercury from electronics has been determined to be a leading source of mercury in municipal waste.

You can play a role in helping reduce the amount of these contaminants getting into the environment. Reuse and recycling prevents electronic items from reaching landfills – creating less waste, providing usable items to organizations that need them and recapturing valuable resources.

Donating electronics for reuse extends the lives of valuable products and keeps them out of the waste management system for a longer time. Before donating your computer or other electronics, make sure the equipment is reusable. Do not donate anything that requires major repairs; most organizations do not have the resources or time to deal with non-working electronic items. The most appropriate organization to handle your donation can vary from area to area. Make some calls to area charities, and don't forget to check with places such as your local school district.

If you can't find any organization willing to accept your used electronic equipment, a growing number of municipalities are offering computer and electronics collections as part of household hazardous waste collections or special events. Public and private organizations have also emerged that accept computers and other electronics for recycling. Depending on where you live and the amount of equipment you have, the best recycling option may be a county recycling drop-off center, TV repair shop, electronics recycling company, or even your local electronics retailer, which may collect used products and send them to a recycler. In some cases, these services are provided free-of-charge.

Another way to help make the environment safer is to buy the many products that are addressing environmental issues. These items are being made with fewer toxins and more recycled content, are more energy efficient, are designed for easy upgrade or disassembly and use less packaging.

For a comprehensive list of reuse and recycling options in Manitoba, Minnesota and North Dakota, go to the Earth 911 website at [www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org).

Enjoy your new gifts, but remember to be responsible when getting rid of your old electronic equipment.

Until the next Ripple Effect,

The Red River Basin Commission (RRBC)

The RRBC is a grassroots organization that is a chartered not-for-profit corporation under the provisions of Manitoba, North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota law. Our offices in Moorhead, MN and Winnipeg, MB can be reached at 218-291-0422 and 204-982-7254, or you can check out our website at [www.redriverbasincommission.org](http://www.redriverbasincommission.org).