

# Unwanted electronics spur e-scrap recycling efforts

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Recycling events aim to keep 'e-scrap' out of Utah landfills

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As this gadget and that gizmo hits the market, Utah's landfills are rapidly becoming graveyards for unwanted electronic equipment, a trend many officials are working to stop.

Utah's five University of Phoenix campuses — from St. George in the south to Clearfield in the north — are serving as drop-off recycling points for unwanted electronics from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. through Friday.

Jeri Cartwright, university spokeswoman, said last year's week-long event generated 3,500 pounds of electronics, including an old overhead projector.

The items will be kept "under lock and key" at the university campuses and then turned over to a recycling company on April 22, Earth Day, to be purged of any information that may compromise a donor's privacy.

Cartwright said a 100 percent of the materials are recycled and stay in the United States.

That component of a recycling program is important since the majority of so-called "e-scrap" donated for re-use ironically ends up in developing countries where there are few environmental protections in place.

Shipping it out of country represents quick cash and an easy-out for those in the recycling industry who dispose of the property but don't do in the appropriate way, explained Eric Anderson with GRX in Clearfield.

GRX — or Guaranteed Recycling Xperts — is the only recycling company in Utah that has earned an "E-Steward" designation from Basel Action Network, an international watch-dog group that seeks to halt the export of toxic products to developing countries.

Anderson, GRX's regional manager, said E-Steward companies do not export any of the recyclables collected and ensure no products end up in U.S. landfills.

Between 200,000 and 300,000 pounds of equipment is broken down at the company's Clearfield site each month, Anderson said, and then sent to "downstream" partners who refine the product some more before it goes back on the market.

While more and more people are becoming conscious of the need to recycle electronic equipment, Anderson said there is a certain mindset that has to be overcome.

"We charge for our service to make sure it gets properly taken care of in the appropriate way," Anderson said. "We have to in order to cover our costs."

That practice is in contrast to other arenas of the recycling movement.

"People are used to thinking that if they smash enough aluminum cans they can make some money from it, but here there is a charge."

Cost, too, can be a prohibitive deterrent for community-wide recycling events, said Sam Schroyer, an environmental scientist with the state Department of Environmental Quality.

"Funding is a big issue. It is pretty expensive to put on a community collection day; it can be a big burden for a local community."

The state does have some grant money to tap into to offset costs, Schroyer said, which is what was used to help sponsor an April 22 e-scrap recycling day from 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the University of Utah. The drop-off is at the University Services Building parking lot just west of the Huntsman Center.

Although Utah does not have a state-wide e-scrap recycling program, it is exploring what efforts can be embraced to encourage the practice, Schroyer said.

A joint resolution passed in the last legislation sessions encourages e-scrap recycling and established a steering committee made up of recyclers, DEQ, the Recycling Coalition of Utah and others. The group is to report back to legislative members this summer with recommendations, Schroyer said.

University of Phoenix drop-off locations:

Murray: 5373 S. Green St., Suite 300

Taylorsville: 4393 Riverboat Road, Suite 100.

Pleasant Grove: 2174 West Grove Parkway

North Davis: 1366 Legend Hills Drive, Clearfield

St. George: 965 E. 700 South Suite 304