

Electronics Recycling – What to Consider When Choosing a Contractor

1. **Cost** – The cost to recycle collected material often makes up the bulk of a collection cost, so it is critical to find a company that can offer an affordable price. However, the adage "too good to be true" generally is. Fact is, to recycle electronics in a safe, environmentally responsible manner does cost, and if the price seems unreasonably cheap or there is no cost, the final disposition of the material should be questioned.
2. **Overseas Markets** – Does the contractor process, sort or technically assess materials domestically? It is generally recognized that some secondary materials must be recycled overseas and legitimate foreign markets do exist. However, if materials are not processed, sorted or technically assessed domestically, this is an indication that further examination is necessary.
3. **Whole Units or Materials** – If materials go overseas, in what form – whole components or as reduced individual materials? If the former, chances are they could be mined in an unhealthy way. Ask contractors if they have any relationships, and to what extent, with the manufacturers. If the manufacturers are working with them, then chances are they've checked into their practices.
4. **Reliable End Markets** – Ask contractors about their end markets for materials. Where are they and who are they? Do end markets exist for all materials?
5. **Landfilling** – What percentage of material from collections is landfilled? Often only the "wood" from console televisions are landfilled.
6. **Reuse** – Extend the life of the computer whenever possible. Ask contractors what percentage of materials goes to reuse and what percentage are recycled.
7. **Experience** – Ask a prospective contractor how many collections they've done. Can they provide references from recent collections? What is their safety record?
8. **Services and Staffing** – Decide what services you need then ask what services they offer for the actual collection. Will they staff a collection? Does the Contractor have adequate staff and facility to handle what could be a much larger collection than expected? Are skids/forklifts/trailers provided? Hard drive erasure? Event promotion? Transportation support? Tell them to what extent they should be involved and find out what you will have to pay for.
9. **Scope of Products** – Ask contractors to specify what products they will accept. Do they accept all the materials that you want recycled? The bigger variety of products the better, as residents will bring all kinds of unwanted stuff. For instance, will they accept microwaves? What about speakers and wires? Also, if the collection sponsor doesn't have an outlet for ancillary items such as manuals, OCC and Styrofoam, can the contractor recycle these?
10. **Documentation** – Does the Contractor have an EPA ID number, provide information on its compliance history or offer evidence of proper permits?

For more information: <http://www.federalectronicchallenge.net/Tools/select.pdf>