

Barry County Receives Two-Year Electronics Recycling Grant

As the gift-giving season nears, many things in our homes will become old news, like electronics. Think twice before you toss out used or broken devices in the trash! Electronics are not accepted in trash or recycling pickup because burying them in landfills causes pollution. When electronics are buried, hazardous chemicals like mercury and lead from the devices leach into soil and groundwater. Also, electronics contain valuable metals such as copper, silver, and gold, which could be reused. Did you know that Americans throw away old phones containing around \$60 million in gold and silver annually?

So what to do with all those old electronics? Start an electronics recycling or donations box! Most items in working order can be donated to thrift stores or other local donation centers, except for CRTs and LCDs.

Electronics that do not work or cannot be donated can be recycled at the county's spring household spring hazardous waste (HHW) collection event. Almost anything with batteries or a plug is accepted at these events.

Items commonly collected include computers, cell phones, hard drives, printers, scanners, keyboards, computer mice, tablets, TVs, DVD players, VCRs, speakers, radios, small kitchen appliances like coffee makers, blenders, crockpots, and video game consoles. Large appliances, such as ovens or washing machines, and anything containing freon, like air conditioners, cannot be accepted.

This year, the Barry County Solid Waste Oversight Committee (SWOC) added electronics collection to its two HHW events in Hastings. Most electronics were accepted at no charge, but there was a fee for CRT and LCD monitors and TVs. Community members loved the events and brought in a whopping 27,692 pounds of electronics to recycle!

The demand from residents for more collections was so great that Barry County decided to apply for a Rural Electronics grant. Last month, the county was awarded that grant for four electronics collections in 2023 and 2024. The collections will occur at the spring HHW event in Hastings and in the summer in the Village of Nashville. This second location will make it easier for those in more rural areas to attend an event.

The grant will help cover the cost of CRT and LED recycling and disposal, so don't forget to bring that old tube TV from the basement! For these four events only, SWOC will collect all electronics at no charge. Donations of \$10 will be encouraged for LCD/CRT TVs and monitors, to help keep the program sustainable. Dates and locations will be announced in early 2023 on the Barry County Recycles Facebook page, at barrycountyrecycles.com, and in the Reminder. These events are available thanks to Padnos, the official electronics waste recycler for these events. This project is funded by a grant from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE).