

E-waste requires special handling

By **Tony Spinelli**
 STAFF WRITER

A large plastic garbage bin full of old computers and monitors sits in the electronic waste bay of the Ansonia transfer station.

The computers appear to have been made several years ago — not old by many standards, but ancient in the computer world.

That's why people throw them away, and towns and cities in the region must deal with growing piles of electronic waste. Every town and city has a different way of collecting it.

In Monroe, residents throwing out old computers and other electronic waste take it to the Trumbull transfer station, Art Baker, Monroe's director of public works, said.

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"You can't put it in a landfill, and you don't want to send this stuff to get burned in an incinerator because those components are so heavy," Baker said. So it goes to a specialized electronics recycling center.

"They get taken apart and the components get reused, sold on the market, or maybe used as scrap metal. Anything that can be reused gets reused," Baker said.

Some towns send their electronic waste to thecomputerrecycler.com in Cromwell.

But what happens to electronic waste when it leaves the transfer station?

Any number of fates beckon.

Under Connecticut law, private household electronic waste can be placed into the refuse stream — which some-

times means it is incinerated with other trash. Public and business electronic waste, however, must be properly recycled.

The worst fate for electronic waste is to end up in a landfill. Electronic waste contains potentially hazardous substances, including cadmium, mercury and chromium, that can leach into groundwater. But electronic waste sometimes contains valuable materials, as well.

Electronic waste that has not been refurbished or stripped for components is melted down to recover the small amounts of gold, silver and other metals worth reusing.

Computer circuit boards often contain gold, since it is a good conductor of electricity and is resistant to corrosion. There is not enough gold in a computer to benefit the owner, but there is

value enough for a recycler who stockpiles thousands of them.

"The old clunkers have the most," said Richard Cianci, owner of thecomputerrecycler.com.

The company breaks down electronic waste for its recyclable materials, then sends the metals to refineries to be melted down.

East Coast Asset Recovery, based in Waterbury, offers the same type of service.

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Electronic waste

Examples of electronic waste include:

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| ■ Computers | ■ Telephones | ■ DVD players and recorders |
| ■ Printers | ■ Cell phones | ■ Electric typewriters |
| ■ Monitors | ■ VCRs | ■ Televisions |
| ■ Fax machines | ■ Cassette decks | |
| ■ Police scanners | ■ Stereo components | |

SOURCE: SMALL DOG ELECTRONICS

Printing imperfections present during scanning

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