

*For Eco-Tip August 6, 2017*

## **Fees Rise for Electronic Items**

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Some recycling would happen naturally, as a profitable venture, without the intervention of laws, rules, regulations, and government-sponsored incentives for businesses. However, recycling rates would be much lower, depriving future generations of access to the same resources we now enjoy and resulting in higher levels of pollution from global manufacturing.

Management of electronic waste is one area where public sector involvement is the essential element of most recycling. At the beginning of last month, fees rose for the purchase of “covered” electronics in California. Now, when you buy an item with a screen, such as a cell phone or a television, you will pay a fee ranging from \$5 to \$7, depending on the size of the screen.

According to the web site of the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle), an increase of about \$2 per screen was necessary to “maintain solvency” in the fund used to pay collectors and recyclers to continue working in an otherwise unprofitable business. Retailers collecting the fee retain only 3% for administrative costs.

Although the metals, plastic, and glass of electronic items could be acquired less expensively from other sources, boosting recycling rates for electronics also provides the benefits of job creation and keeps dangerous materials out of landfills. Motherboards, screens, batteries, and other electronic components contain heavy metals with the potential to cause contamination.

Earlier this year (March 16, 2017), new rules eased the process for local governments to designate approved collectors of e-waste, so more collection options may grow. In the meantime, you can find your nearest e-waste recycling option by contacting your local recycling coordinator or going to <http://earth911.com> (enter you zip code and “electronics” as the item you want to recycle).

Most local thrift stores accept working electronics for resale. Cell phones are different, and any retailer selling them is obligated to accept old cell phones for recycling.

*For more information:*

<http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/Electronics/Collection/>

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[http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/HazardousWaste/EWaste/upload/HWMP\\_FS\\_AB2901-2.pdf](http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/HazardousWaste/EWaste/upload/HWMP_FS_AB2901-2.pdf)