Toner Cartridge Reuse and Recycling

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Of the 500 million printer cartridges sold each year in the United States, 350 million are disposed in landfills, according to Earth911.org, which provides a free online locator service for recycling opportunities of various types.

This waste of resources is also a waste of money. Each toner cartridges is worth around two dollars credit in the largest retailer trade-in programs, at Staples, Office Max, and Office Depot. Another option for recycling is mail-back programs. Cartridge manufacturers offer shipping labels for free mail-back without payment, but some online cartridge dealers show on their websites long lists of which used laser toner and ink jet cartridges they pay for, provided customers ship at least 20 per box and follow other requirements.

Recycling Advantage, one of these online collectors paying for used cartridges listed prices for used laser toner cartridges ranging from 25 cents to \$3.75 per unit and ink jet cartridges ranging from 5 cents to \$1.80 each. Unused cartridges from surplus or liquidation, still in their sealed bags, have far more value. If you switch printers but still have unused cartridges in sealed bags, contact a company like Galaxy Surplus in Ojai. Ink jet cartridges retain value for only three years, but laser toner cartridges have no expiration dates.

Refilling your own cartridge is also a great way to save money. Some models can be refilled for a fee at participating Walgreens or Costco photo departments. Others can be refilled at home with kits purchased online. Most refillable cartridges have two refill holes or a single refill port under the product label sticker.

Refilling, reusing, or recycling toner cartridges saves money while avoiding the landfilling of plastic, which is made from petroleum resources. Also, since many products of this type are imported, but repair, recharging, and refurbishing of cartridges often occurs domestically, favoring reuse over disposal supports the American economy.

Through June 30, helping animals is another reason to recycle toner cartridges. The Ventura County Animal Services Department has a large animal cage in the lobby of the Ventura County Government Center. Next to a plush toy dog inside the cage, a poster urges drop-off of cartridges. Earlier this week, the cage was overflowing with donations for Animal Services, which operates two shelters and coordinates pet adoption, licensing, vaccination, and other services for more than 10,000 animals per year.