

make it – sell it – recycle it

New rules for the disposal of electrical and electronic equipment

What do the WEEE Regulations mean for householders?

What is WEEE?

WEEE is waste electronic and electrical equipment like TVs, fridges and computers. It is one of the fastest growing waste streams in Europe. Every year in the UK households throw away around 1 million tonnes of it. We have a good record of recycling large kitchen appliances like fridges, cookers and washing machines, but many other items are not treated or recycled and get buried in landfill sites. This wastes resources and puts a major strain on the environment.

New regulations about the way we manage WEEE came into force this year. The regulations apply to all companies who import, manufacture or re-brand electrical equipment in the UK. They also affect everyone who uses, sells, treats or disposes of WEEE.

The regulations aim to tackle the growing amount of WEEE that is disposed of by setting targets for recycling and making producers pay for treating and recycling end-of-life electrical equipment.

Changes you might notice

The existing options for having your equipment collected, reused or recycled will continue to be available to you. However from 1 July 2007, you will now start to see information in shops that sell electrical goods. This will explain how the shop is going to take back WEEE. They must either offer in-store take-back or be a part of the Distributor Take-back Scheme (and so tell you where to take it). There will also be information in store about the environmental impact of WEEE and what you can do to help.

What you can do as a householder

- Think about the environmental consequences before replacing your mobile phone, computer or other gadgets. Do you really need to buy a new product? Your equipment could be upgraded or you could buy a refurbished product instead. If you have working equipment that you no longer need, think about passing it on to others.
- When you buy a new electrical product on or after 1 July 2007, you should ask the shop how they are going to take back your old one. They have to do this for free when you make a like-for-like purchase (for example take back your old toaster when you buy a new one), no matter where you bought the

original product. Shops can take back goods in store or tell you where your nearest local drop off point is (for example, your council's waste or recycling site). If you have bought a new item the shop should allow you a reasonable period after you have bought it to return the old equipment it is replacing. You can also ask the shop if they provide a collection service and what it costs. Retailers can only charge for collecting, not treating, the WEEE.

- You can carry on taking WEEE to your local household waste recycling/civic amenity site where it will be separated out for recycling.
- Ask your council to collect your waste electrical products: they must collect it if you ask but may make a charge for doing so. So even if you are not buying a new electrical product, you can get rid of your old unwanted ones. You will not be committing an offence by putting it in your bin, but it's much better if you have it reused or recycled.

Product marking

You can tell which products are covered by these regulations, by looking out for the 'crossed out wheeled bin symbol'. From 1 April 2007, all new electrical products placed on the market must have this symbol. However many producers have been using this symbol for some time now, so you may already spot it on products you already own.

The following types of household electrical and electronic equipment are covered by the WEEE Regulations. They are products that need electricity for their main function. So for example, a gas cooker with a small electrical clock would not be WEEE, because the main function (cooking) is not electrical.

- Large household appliances, e.g. washing machines, freezers.
- Small household appliances, e.g. vacuum cleaners, sewing machines.
- IT and telecommunications equipment, eg computers, keyboards and mobile phones.
- Consumer equipment, e.g. radios, TVs.
- Lighting equipment, (**excluding** filament light bulbs and household light fittings and lamps.)
- Electrical and electronic tools e.g. electric drills, electric saws.
- Toys, leisure and sports equipment, e.g. electric train sets, video game consoles etc.



Where to find out more

- Your council/local authority (their contact details will be on your latest council tax bill)
- Retailers of electrical and electronic goods
- The DTI website, www.dti.gov.uk
- www.environment-agency.gov.uk/weee
- Environment Agency helpline **08708 506 506**

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