



Press Release

U.S. General Services Administration

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Contact: Dan Cruz
202-441-0607
dan.cruz@gsa.gov

GSA Announces New E-Waste Policy for Federal Government

Government electronics will now have to be reused and recycled.

PHILADELPHIA – Today, at E-Force Recycling in Philadelphia, U.S. General Services Administrator Martha Johnson announced new guidelines banning all federal agencies from disposing of electronic waste in landfills. The policy will ensure that the federal government is leading by example and that all of its electronics are managed effectively in the disposal process. The policy will also direct electronics to certified recyclers, creating more opportunities for the e-waste industry.

“The federal government as a whole is the nation’s largest consumer of electronics, and through this policy it will now be a more responsible user of electronics,” said Administrator Martha Johnson. “We are ensuring that electronics from federal agencies will be reused or sent to certified e-waste recycling plants. These steps are protecting human health and the environment, while supporting jobs in the growing e-waste industry.”

The new policy, outlined in a bulletin to federal agencies this week, directs federal agencies to reuse electronics to the maximum extent possible and then direct non-functioning products to certified e-waste recyclers. As electronics reach the end of their utility, asset managers will offer these products to be reused at other agencies, schools, state and local governments, or offer them for sale. Federal agencies are being banned from disposing of these materials in landfills or incinerators, and instead they will now send them to third-party certified e-waste recyclers—under R2 or eStewards—when reuse is not an option. Additionally, recipients of used government electronics are being encouraged to follow the same reuse and certified recycling standards as the federal government.

“As a compliant and certified e-cycler, we are excited to see the government partnering with us in the responsible disposal of electronic waste,” said Jay Segal, President of E-Force Recycling.

The policy also incorporates transparency and accountability into this process by requiring federal agencies to track the volume and destination of electronics they send out for reuse and recycling and report that data online annually, which GSA will make available to the public on Data.gov.

In October of 2009, President Obama issued Executive Order 13514 that set sustainability goals for federal agencies to improve their environmental, energy and economic performance. This executive order called for GSA, the White House Council on Environmental Quality, and the Environmental Protection Agency to create the National Strategy on Electronic Stewardship. The National Strategy, released last summer, tasked GSA to develop policies for federal agencies to responsibly purchase, manage, and recycle electronics. This week’s announcement is the first policy that will bring the goals of the National Strategy across the federal government.

Electronics such as mobile phones, computers, monitors, and copy machines are made from valuable and reusable resources such as rare earth materials, precious metals, plastic, and glass. These devices also contain hazardous and toxic materials, and they must be disposed of properly in order to prevent pollution and risks to public health.

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