



5 Ways to Assess your End-of-Life Electronics Recycler

There are many electronics “recyclers” who do not recycle at all—they merely ship your equipment to developing countries exposing your company to a range of data security, environmental and brand protection issues. Others operate poorly within the US exposing your company to the same issues.

Here are a few ways to help you assess your recycler:

1. **Can they provide you with a “Statement of Qualifications or Compliance Package”** - evidence of their permits, policies and procedures? Recycling electronics requires various permits such as air emissions, waste permits and hazardous waste generation registration. Do they have an EPA number for each site, an environmental management system such as ISO 14001, can they provide copies of their Environmental, Health, and Safety policies and practices including emergency response plans, employee training plans and records?
2. **Can they show you how they assure Data Security** – if your recycler is only talking about hard drives from computers and servers they are NOT the recycler for you. Data security exposures exist in the hard drives and flash cards routinely contained in printers, scanners, and faxes; through cell phones, Blackberries and other communication devices; and all the way down to network equipment containing network-specific information such as static IP addresses. Ask for their security policy, do they wipe hard drives to NIST 800-88? Do they shred to DoD/DSS standards, are they a member of NAID?
3. **Can they show how they manage environmentally** – your recycler needs to manage your environmental exposure both on- and off-site. On-site they need all relevant permits and authorizations, together with an environmental management system such as ISO 14001. Off-site they need to undertake downstream site audits of their vendors, especially for Materials of Concern such as batteries, CRT glass, mercury bulbs, PCBs capacitors and so on. Do they have copies of these audits you can review?
4. **What locations and equipment do they have** – recycling electronics requires large, expensive equipment. A decent sized recycling line can cost between \$7M to \$14M depending upon the complexity and looks like this photo (Sims Recycling Solutions-Nashville). If your recycler’s plant only looks the size of a large refrigerator, it will NOT be recycling your material. If the recycler says they handle 40M lbs per year, they’ll need a site of around 150,000 sq ft and around 100-150 staff.
5. **Audit, Audit, Audit** – no “recycler” is going to say “yes, we just chuck all your equipment in a container bound for Nigeria”, even if a recent report by the GAO indicated that around 75% of “recyclers” do just that. Make sure you visit your recycler and benchmark against others using 1-4 above. Yes, it can seem like a lot of hassle; however, when compared to the commercial downsides of your customers credit card data, bank account information, medical records, etc. being exposed, or the negative impact to your company’s brand of their equipment being filmed as it is dumped in Asia or Africa, a couple of site-audits of different recyclers will start to look very cheap.



We welcome tours and audits. When you are interested in finding out more about how Sims Recycling Solutions can help you best manage your IT assets, whether it be resale or recycling, contact us at 800-323-1574 or check us out on the web at www.us.simsrecycling.com