

Issue: Electronic Waste Recycling

The Problem: Electronic waste is the fastest growing waste stream in the world, growing 3-5 percent per year. In fact, around 20 percent of waste globally is from e-waste, while it comprises 70 percent of toxins in landfills. Yet, most anything with a cord, battery or circuit board can be recycled. Out of 266 million pounds of e-waste generated annually in Minnesota, only about 24% is captured, recycled, and reused.



This presents a significant health risk, as well as an economic loss. E-waste in landfills leaches toxins into water supplies, while that burned in garbage incinerators puts dangerous toxins into the air we breathe. Some e-waste causes fires in waste hauling vehicles, landfills, buildings, and more. This adds expense to collection fees and taxes, not to mention damage to the health of nearby residents.

Economic Opportunity: A recent study discovered that if 100 percent of Minnesota's e-waste were recovered, it **could generate \$2.8 billion** and **create almost 1740 directly related jobs** (and many indirect jobs). Sixty-eight different minerals/metals are recoverable, the most valuable of which include Palladium, Platinum, Gold, Copper, Tin, Lithium, Iron, Aluminum, Silver, and Ruthenium. Enough silver can be recovered for 441,000 solar panels, and enough copper for 155,000 electric vehicles. [See [The Economic Potential of E-Waste Recycling in Minnesota: A Pilot Study](#) - p. 6 element charts; pictures/facts from p.7].

Past Legislation: Minnesota's Electronics Recycling Act, passed in 2007, is out of date. Some of what it defined as e-waste included electronics like CD/DVD players, VCRs, and other electronics that are no longer popular. Meanwhile, items like Bluetooth ear buds did not even exist until more recent years yet include lithium batteries and circuit boards. E-cigarettes didn't start infiltrating the U.S. market until the late 2000s (and in the case of disposable vapes, aren't even rechargeable). Also, smart phones which most of us now carry (and replace every couple of years) started gaining wide popularity in the years after the introduction of the iPhone at the end of June in 2007 (after the end of the legislative session which passed the Electronics Recycling Act).

At its peak, under the 2007 legislation, around 40 million pounds of e-waste was collected, but by 2021 that was down to only 20 million pounds. Currently, residents and businesses must pay fees (sometimes hefty amounts) to do the right thing by depositing e-waste for recycling. Limited drop-off locations and items collected present further barriers.

2025 Legislative Proposal: Lutheran Advocacy-MN is joining other organizations to pass legislation that would...

- 1) **Change the definition of e-waste** to include any device covered that has a cord, battery, or circuit board. (This is a broad and flexible definition, which covers any device into the future, including those not yet conceived of)
Exclusions:
 - Lead acid batteries (a car battery buyback program already exists, resulting in a 95% recovery rate)
 - Electronic Vehicles & Infrastructure (recycled by a different process and different stakeholders)
 - White Waste – Refrigerators, washers, dryers,
- 2) Provide **free accessible drop-off or collection** of e-waste statewide for residents AND businesses.
- 3) Require **manufacturers to cover the cost** of free recycling collection statewide, **based on the percent of gross sales of electronics in the state**. For instance, if Apple or Samsung have 35% of the electronics sales, they would pay that proportional amount for the cost of collection including disposal, shipping, up to two employees per collector, and an additional incentive per pound. This spreads the cost very broadly and is already done for other waste (like packaging). It would be managed by a non-profit under the authority of the MN Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). The MPCA will put out an RFP (Request for Proposals) to find the right group to manage the program details.

Sources:

1. Maria Jensen: Repowered (Environment, Health, & Safety); Recycling Electronics for Climate Action (RECA); Areas of Study: Public Health (Research Methods); Environmental Toxicology & Public Health. Presentations: MEP Climate & Energy Cluster; [Ely Tuesday Group](#)
2. Lucy Mullany: Eureka Recycling. Presentations/Discussions: MEP Climate & Energy Cluster
3. Jensen, Maria; Roopali Phadke; Keith Steva; Marlise Riffel. "[The Economic Potential of E-Waste Recycling in Minnesota: A Pilot Study](#)." Iron Range Partnership for Sustainability; Repowered; Macalester College. August 2023.
4. "[Harnessing the Economic Potential of E-Waste Recycling: A New MN Study](#)." Repowered.
5. Smieja, Jon. "[The Enormous Opportunity of E-Waste Recycling](#)." World Economic Forum. March 24, 2023.

What is Needed for a Good Advocacy Letter?



As you try to get the attention of your legislators, you'll want to **use your own words** and **personalize** your letter as much as possible. They want to know what YOU think. **Notecards** or **stationery** can make the letter feel even more personal. A simple personalized letter, note, or email is usually worth more than hundreds of form letters. Contact Lutheran Advocacy-MN for updates and bill numbers (as available) or check the website for additional resources. ****[Who Represents Me? <https://www.gis.lcc.mn.gov/iMaps/districts/>]****

A good letter will also include the following elements:

- 1) **Your Name & Address on Envelope & Letter:** Legislators want to know that you are their constituent and where you live (or where you go to church, if you are writing to the legislator from that district).
- 2) **Who You Are:** Mention something about yourself, like what church you are from, and if you have first-hand experience with the issue.
- 3) **Ask for Specific Action:** "Please support..." If there is a bill number, this is the place to include it.
- 4) **Give a Reason or Say Something About Why You Care:** Speak from your heart, elaborate from the talking points, or tell a story.

Mail the letters to these addresses:

Sen. _____, Minnesota State Senate, MN Senate Building, 95 University Ave. W., St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. _____, Minnesota House of Representatives, 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55155

Talking Points & Sample Letter: E-Waste

Legislative "Ask":

Please support SF1690 (senate)/HF1426 (house), the bill to update MN's 2007 Electronics Recycling Act to

- **Expand the definition of electronic waste (e-waste)**
- **Provide for statewide free e-waste drop-off**
- **Require manufacturers to pay the recycling collection costs** for e-waste (like other programs also managed by the MPCA)

Possible Talking Points (choose a couple):

- I believe we must be good stewards of all that God has created.
- E-waste leaches toxins into our water and air.
- Anything with a lithium battery is a fire hazard in the trash, including air pods, singing cards, and e-cigarettes.
- The 2007 Minnesota Electronics Recycling Act is out of date as many new technologies are not covered or collected.
- Research shows that people are more likely to turn in old electronics if drop-off sites are free and accessible.
- Electronic waste contains high value metals like copper, platinum, silver, gold, & iron that can and should be recycled.
- Of 266 million pounds of e-waste produced in Minnesota annually, only about 24% gets collected and recycled.
- The minerals in Minnesota's e-waste would be worth 2.8 billion annually if captured and recycled.
- In moving from fossil fuels toward cleaner options to address the climate crisis, these minerals are increasing in demand.
- Recycling (or mining) of e-waste could add more than 1700 jobs

Example (please use your own words)

Date

Dear Rep. _____ (or Sen. _____),

We've been learning about e-waste at our church (2nd Lutheran, Lovelystown) & want to be able to recycle our old electronics. Putting them in the trash is a fire and health hazard, as toxins leach into our water and air.

There aren't any electronic drop-off sites in this part of the state, and even where there are, not all electronics are collected or recycled. Only about 2.4% of 266 million pounds of e-waste annually produced in MN are collected, recycled, and reused due to outdated laws.

It's time to update our 2007 Electronics Recycling Act to expand the definition of e-waste, provide accessible and free drop-off or collection, and have manufacturers pay the cost of collection. Please support the bill led by Rep. Hollins and Sen. Kupec.

The minerals and metals in e-waste are increasingly in demand as the world works to move away from fossil fuels. Not only that, it could be an economic boon for Minnesota, worth \$2.8 billion annually and creating more than 1700 jobs statewide.

Thank you!

Name

Address