

Case Study: Electronic Waste Recycling Increases Waste Diversion

The U.S. Railroad Retirement Board headquarters in Chicago recycled more than 3,200 pounds of electronic waste in one year, a nearly 10 percent increase over its baseline the previous year. This was accomplished by finding additional recycling or repurposing options for the agency's equipment through the property management process and the Computers for Learning program.

RRB's electronic waste reuse and recycling is driven by two federal programs. The agency began donating excess computers in 1997 upon enactment of Executive Order 12999, Computers for Learning. This order established a registry of schools in need of computer equipment and streamlined the disposition process. Because RRB is a small, independent agency with minimal staff, the Computers for Learning program's efficiency was appealing. The schools receiving the computer equipment were thrilled and



The Railroad Retirement Board is in the Lipinski Federal Building in Chicago.

expressed their gratitude, which boosted RRB staff morale and provided an incentive to continue and improve the initiative. Since 1997, all surplus desktop equipment in good condition has been donated through the program.

Most other electronic equipment, including televisions, computer servers and networking equipment, is recycled by a certified electronics recycler which ensures that best management

Key Topics

- Electronics recycling.
- Property management.

Results

- Recycled over 3,200 pounds of electronics.

Facility at a Glance

- Housed in a 12-story building on a city block in downtown Chicago.
- Primary federal tenant in a GSA-owned building maintained by RRB with businesses leasing space on the first floor.
- Small, independent agency, headquartered in Chicago, IL with a staff of 940.
- Participant since 2011 in the FGC water and electronics categories.
- Recipient of two 2012 EPA Region 5 FGC Awards: Water and Electronics.

Sustainable Materials Management

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Waste Diversion Increased

practices are met.

Using certified electronics recyclers offers a way to assess the environmental, worker health and security practices of the recyclers. RRB collects the items, follows property management practices that might identify other agencies that can reuse them, packages them for shipment, and acquires cost proposals from the electronic recyclers to find the most economical solution.

Finally, RRB rounds out its electronics recycling activities by sending reusable mobile devices back to the telecommunications provider where it receives credit on its bill.

RRB tracks disposition results in GSAXCESS and on the Computers for Learning website. Electronic recycling data is uploaded and available to agency personnel to track and download data and create reports required by RRB.

While the agency has been successful in its electronic waste recycling program, the program

has not been without challenges.

One challenge was ensuring consistent and complete removal of data from equipment hard drives. To address this, the agency's property management group met with IT departments to establish processes and procedures to ensure compliance with security requirements prior to placing electronic equipment in surplus storage areas for recycling.

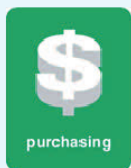
Another challenge was finding sufficient storage space for temporarily housing equipment until recycling occurs. Mobile and utility racks were adapted to use as much vertical space as possible and to facilitate efficient transfer of equipment when retrieved by the receiving party.

Finally, requirements for disposition change. To hear about these changes, trends in electronics recycling, and new tools and resources, RRB property staff attends property management and disposition training offered by GSA.

About the Federal Green Challenge

The Federal Green Challenge, part of EPA's Sustainable Materials Management Program, is designed to challenge federal agencies throughout the country to lead by example in reducing the federal government's environmental impact. It helps agencies meet obligations under Executive Orders 13514 and 13423.

In 2012, nearly 300 federal agencies, representing more than 500,000 employees participated in the Federal Green Challenge. Their combined efforts resulted in an estimated cost savings of more than \$31 million to U.S. taxpayers.



For More Information

RRB contact:

Sally Mui
312-751-4711
sally.mui@rrb.gov

Federal Green Challenge:

<http://epa.gov/fgc>