

Tons of people in Beaufort County will be getting tons of new stuff for Christmas.



And when I say tons, I mean literally tons. Tons of new computers, new iPods, new Wiis, new things I don't even know the names of.

After you get a new thing, you generally want to get rid of your old thing. You know, whatever it was that the new thing is replacing. And if your old gadget is a piece of garbage, you'll probably just trash it.

If it's in pretty good shape, though, you'll probably do the environmentally friendly thing and give it to someone else. Then they'll take their old one... and probably just trash it.

Either way we end up with a lot of trashed electronics at the end of the holiday season.

And it ends up costing us in more ways than one.

I am purposefully using the pronouns "we" and "us" because Beaufort County taxpayers pay dearly for the privilege of parking our trash in the Jasper County landfill.

There is another, better way, though. On January 19, two solid waste convenience centers – the one on Shanklin Road and the one on Ulmer Road – will offer a drive-in and drop-off service for used electronics.

On this day only, the county has contracted with a company that specializes in collecting used e-junk, and they will be there on-site from 9 am to 3 pm to get whatever you have to give. This includes everything EXCEPT TVs: computers, printers, scanners, power supplies, monitors, hard drives, servers, laptops, cables & wires, surge protectors, switch boxes, sound equipment, tape drives, calculators, copy machines, VCRs, DVD players, electric motors, cash registers, overhead projectors, transformers, test equipment, telephones, and cell phones.

If you have a TV, you have to pay \$10 for them to take it off your hands. There's a disposal fee for TVs because they contain so much noxious stuff.

In fact, all that e-waste is full of noxious stuff. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, here is a list of all the crap in your old Christmas presents:

Cadmium is found in chip resistors, infrared detectors, and semiconductors. It messes up your kidneys.

Lead is found in glass panels in computer monitors and in the soldering on circuit boards.

It messes up your brains, your blood and your kidneys.

Mercury is found in sensors, printed circuit boards, cell phones and batteries. It causes brain damage.

Brominated Flame Retardants are found on circuit boards and the plastic parts of products. They may increase cancer risk.

Gee, thanks, Santa.

There is other iffy stuff, like arsenic, beryllium, and copper, in our cell phones and other beloved consumer products. But the good news is that you can keep that junk out of the landfill by recycling it.

The EPA is all gung-ho about electronics recycling. By the way, for those of you who delight in the absurdity of federal government consumer education efforts, be sure to view their interactive presentation, "Milestones in Garbage."

Really. "Milestones in Garbage." Go ahead, Google it. The first listing is the ho-hum alt text version, the second one is the interactive version, which includes an exciting final segment, "1990-Present: Recycling Enters the Mainstream."

Okay, so I've already listed two reasons recycling electronics is good: The number 1 reason was saving Beaufort County taxpayers' hard-earned dollars, and the number 2 reason was

diverting evil toxins from our waste stream.

A number 3 reason is global warming. Or climate change. Or whatever you want to call it.

Yes, giving your old broken down GPX cassette player to the recycle guys on Jan. 19 will make Al Gore happy.

That's because it takes less fossil-fuel energy to manufacture goods from recycled materials than from virgin materials. When we use less fossil-fuel energy, we dump less carbon into our atmosphere.

Sure, it might be a bit of an inconvenient drive for you to get to the convenience centers on Shanklin Road or Ulmer Road – so it's not exactly a carbon-neutral kind of activity. But maybe you can organize a collection for your apartment complex, or your workplace, so just one person has to make the drive.

And what to listen to on the way? Why, heavy metal, of course.