



**Computer Aid  
International**

## ***Your Guide to Choosing an IT Disposal Partner***

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# Introduction

## **The WEEE directive**

In 2007, the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive – The [WEEE Directive](#) - came into force in the UK. Its aim is to reduce the amount of waste electrical and electronic equipment (e-waste) being produced and to encourage everyone to reuse and recycle.

## **The e-waste issue**

Every year, thousands of containers of e-waste make their way from the most developed countries, including the UK, to dumping grounds in Africa, China and India, despite import bans and the WEEE Directive.

How? Fraudulent traders are posing as legitimate reuse and recycling organisations and enticing unwitting businesses to use them for the disposal of electrical equipment. These traders do not declare the contents of their shipments as hazardous e-waste, but falsely claim consignments consist entirely of electrical equipment destined for productive reuse in developing countries.

This toxic trade is driven by the motive of profit, but the actual cost is borne by the environment and the people who disassemble the equipment.

## **Stopping the toxic trade**

The Environment Agency is taking action against the organised criminals involved in harmful illegal trade. However, organisations and companies also have a vital role to play in stopping the flow of e-waste by ensuring they use reputable commercial or not for profit organisations – putting the e-waste cowboys out of business.

This document highlights the seven key questions any IT department, organisation or individual should ask an IT disposal company to ensure electronic goods such as PCs, laptops and monitors are disposed of legally and in the most environmentally-friendly way.

# The seven questions to ask an IT disposal organisation

## 1. Do they have the right permits to deal with e-waste?

Organisations that process e-waste must hold a relevant permit or a registered WEEE refurbishers exemption; in England and Wales these are issued and monitored by the Environment Agency. In Scotland this is carried out by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA). Sites that process e-waste are sometimes referred to as Authorised Treatment Facilities (ATFs).

The Environment Agency or SEPA can confirm whether a particular operator is allowed to treat e-waste. Operators of ATFs who want to be able to issue evidence under the WEEE Regulations apply for approval to the Environment Agency or SEPA. If approved, they are known as Approved Authorised Treatment Facilities (AATFs).

The Environment Agency publishes a list of AATFs which is freely available on their website. Check that a company is approved by visiting <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/topics/waste/32086.aspx> and downloading the list.

## 2. Can they provide you with a certificate of data destruction?

Organisations have an obligation under the Data Protection Act 1998 to ensure that confidential data about employees or customers is not disclosed without the consent of the individual concerned. Therefore, it's imperative that if you're handing over your PC or laptop to a third party you are confident all data on the machines will be completely removed. Make sure the IT disposal company can provide a certificate of data destruction and guarantee 100% destruction of all data.

## 3. Will they provide copies of data wiping insurance?

Make sure the IT disposal company has public liability insurance that covers all your equipment as soon as it goes into their possession, as well as data wiping insurance. Ask for copies of these documents so you can be confident that they can accept full legal responsibility for your kit.

#### **4. Can they provide a written guarantee of 0% landfill of non-reusable equipment?**

It is a requirement of the WEEE Directive that any equipment that is recycled is done so through a company with an appropriate permit issued by the Environment Agency. Look for organisations that can guarantee 0% landfill, so your waste has minimal impact on the environment.

#### **5. Can they show documentation of their waste stream and that of their subcontractors?**

Can you be confident that none of your equipment will end up being photographed on an e-waste dump somewhere in Africa? Make sure your IT disposal partner can provide documentary evidence of what happened to your equipment – where it was sent to, which parts were reused and which were recycled. Take references from their previous clients to show that they did in fact provide documentation.

Some organisations will also asset-track working equipment that is refurbished for reuse, bar-coding the PC or laptop so it can be followed to the exact project it is sent to.

#### **6. Are they a legally registered company?**

The WebCheck service on the Companies House website offers a searchable Company Names and Address Index free of charge, so you can search for information on over two million companies: <http://wck2.companieshouse.gov.uk>.

It's also worth visiting the IT disposal company's website and ringing the landline details they provide to check it's a legitimate telephone number. If they don't have a landline and operate through a PO Box then it's wise to give them a wide berth.

## **7. Do they prioritise reuse over recycling?**

It is a requirement of the WEEE Directive that the reuse of whole appliances is prioritised over recycling. Responsible IT disposal companies will make sure any working equipment can go on to provide further use to another person or organisation, and will test your PC or laptop to ensure it's safe and fit for purpose.

Research has shown it is twenty times better for the environment to reuse a PC rather than recycle it, as 80% of the fossil fuels used over its entire lifecycle have already been consumed before the computer is even switched on for the very first time. When professionally refurbished, an unwanted PC could go on to have a further productive life of three to four years, significantly reducing its impact on the environment.

## **About Computer Aid International**

Computer Aid International is a registered charity (no 1069256) and a registered company (no 3442679) and the world's largest and most experienced not-for-profit supplier of professionally refurbished computers to developing countries.

Founded in 1998, Computer Aid has provided over 160,000 PCs for reuse in schools, hospitals and community projects in more than 100 countries. The charity is an Authorised Approved Treatment Facility, licensed by the Environment Agency to handle electronic equipment. One hundred per cent data destruction is provided to all donors, free of charge, and Computer Aid guarantees compliance with all UK legislation, including the WEEE Directive, Data Protection Act and Environment Act.

The London-based charity fully tests, professionally refurbishes, upgrades and ships high quality Pentium 4 computers donated by UK companies, which include Betfair, Diageo, Royal Mail, Virgin, Investec, Pepsico, Orange, DFID, the Pensions Regulator and WWF.

PC distribution in developing countries is achieved through strategic partnerships with partners such as SchoolNet Zambia, British Council Eritrea, UN-Habitat and UNFPA, as well as the national Computers for Schools programmes of Chile, Kenya, Swaziland and other countries.