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Gov. Sanford signs e-waste recycling bill



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Gov. Mark Sanford signed legislation Thursday that will require electronic manufacturers and sellers to set up recycling programs aimed at keeping electronic components out of landfills.

The bipartisan bill requires manufacturers to set up free collection centers across the state that will allow consumers to drop off unwanted televisions, computers, printers and other devices.

“Seventy percent of the heavy metals in American landfills are as a result of the mercury, the lead (and) the cadmium that comes as a result of electronic waste,” said Sanford.

He said the state produced 53,800 pounds of electronic waste last year and only 1,756 pounds were recycled.

“We can do much better as a state. This bill is about doing that,” said Sanford.

“A TV doesn’t even necessarily have to break and we go buy another one and a lot of people actually throw the old one away,” said Shelley Robbins with Upstate Forever, a Spartanburg based conservation group.

“Even if it is broken they’ll throw it in the trash. That’s not where it belongs. It contains a lot of very valuable components and can be recycled.”

“Why would you put something in a landfill that can be recycled,” asked Randall Essick, director of government affairs for Waste Management in S.C.

He said Waste Management will be working to collect, recycle and recover electronic materials throughout the state.

“Electronics can be 100 percent recyclable,” he said. “We’re always looking for ways to remove things from a waste stream and this is one of those things that can be recycled.”

Officials said the metals contained in TVs, computers and other electronic devices can, over time, make their way into soil and ground water.

“I think this is a great day for sustainability in South Carolina,” said Essick.

Officials are also optimistic that the new law will help to create jobs in the state.

“We hope to provide maybe up to 20 jobs in the upstate area with this business,” he said.

“We would think that this would be a product that can be recycled and by being recycled we think we’ll make money out of it.”

“The recycling industry in South Carolina...is tremendous,” said Robbins.

“We’re going to be working with this bill and with hopefully future legislation to continue to support the growth of the recycling industry, because those are truly green jobs.”

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