

Dearth of vendors forces halt in electronics recycling in York County

Economics, state law also cited as factors

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If you can think of new uses for old televisions — and a way to make money doing it — you might want to call the York County Solid Waste Authority.

The **authority** announced last week that it is suspending collection of electronic waste because it was unable to find a contractor willing to take televisions, computer monitors and other items for recycling.

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York County's existing vendor declined to continue the program in 2016, said Ellen O'Connor, a spokesperson for the authority, based in Manchester Township.

The authority had found a new contractor, but it, too, backed away, she said. The authority collected electronics on two Saturdays every month.

"Now we're scrambling to identify other potentially viable vendors that we can use to support our program, so stay tuned," she said.

In the meantime, O'Connor and others recommend people seek out alternative collection programs, such as one operated by retailer Best Buy.

The situation is a byproduct of falling commodity prices and a state law that bans disposal of electronic waste but, observers say, hasn't kept up with changing market conditions

"This is happening all over Pennsylvania. It's not just York County," O'Connor said.

Collection programs in Dauphin and Lancaster counties are continuing, according to officials in those counties. But Adams County stopped collecting televisions in May, according to a **report from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection**.

Counties rely on vendors to haul off electronics, and the vendors rely on electronics manufacturers to subsidize the costs. Vendors also can sell items, largely for the metal.

But steel prices are falling, and manufacturers provide only a limited subsidy under state law, observers note.

In addition, the cost of recycling old cathode-ray televisions has risen, making the process less cost-effective for contractors working with local municipalities, according to Resa Dimino, a senior adviser at the Product Stewardship Institute, a Boston-based environmental group.

The problem is not going away, Dimino added. "It's a long-term issue. I think there are a lot of people out there trying to resolve it."

DEP officials are among them. They are working with the state legislature to address problems with Pennsylvania's electronics recycling program, authorized under a law known as Act 108, according to Neil Shader, a DEP spokesman.