

# WEEE, the Environment and the consumer



Play your part in ensuring that Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) is recycled responsibly.

[www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie)

## Why recycle waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE)?

Waste electrical equipment is a rapidly growing waste stream in Europe. Significant amounts of WEEE have been consigned to landfill, taking up space and leaving behind environmentally damaging toxic substances. In Ireland, we have had a particular problem with fridges and cookers and other appliances being dumped on mountainsides and country lanes.

## What is the WEEE Directive and what does it do?

To tackle these issues across Europe, the European Union has introduced the WEEE Directive. The Directive requires that from 13 August 2005, all producers of electrical and electronic equipment finance the recovery and recycling of waste electrical and electronic household equipment.



**Race against Waste**

## What should I do with electrical waste?

We all have a responsibility for electrical and electronic waste. Waste electrical and electronic equipment contains hazardous materials which pose a threat to our environmental and human health.

Such waste must be properly sorted, de-contaminated and disassembled.

Therefore, waste electrical and electronic equipment must not be placed in a household bin. The free collection and recycling of old appliances is designed to make sure this hazardous waste is sent for re-use or recycling. Even small appliances such as hairdryers and portable music players should not be put in the bin but brought for recycling.

## Free take back for consumers

Since **13 August 2005**, consumers can recycle their old waste electrical and electronic equipment, free of charge, in the following ways:

### To a Retailer

- Retailers are required by law to take back waste electrical goods and electronic equipment from customers **free of charge**.
- Take back is on a one-for-one basis only and the appliance being returned must be of a **similar type** or have performed the **same function** as the new item purchased. For example, retailers are not obliged to accept a fridge where the consumer has purchased a toaster.
- Where goods are bought over the counter, retailers must take back the old product in-store either at the time of sale or within a maximum of 15 days of the date of sale, provided the consumer can provide proof of purchase.
- Where a new appliance or equipment is being delivered, for example a new washing machine, cooker etc., the seller of the product must take back the old appliance -

(i) on the delivery of a new product either at the time of delivery, provided the old product has been cleaned and disconnected from any utilities and is ready for immediate collection, or

(ii) at their premises within a maximum of 30 days from the date of delivery.

Retailers must give 24 hours notice of a delivery or else return within 15 days to collect the old appliance.

- Whichever take-back option a consumer avails of must be **free of charge**.

### To a Local Authority

Each local authority must accept household WEEE free of charge at its civic amenity facilities from members of the public. **Local authorities can no longer charge gate fees for WEEE.**



## How is the recycling system financed?

In Ireland the recycling system is handled by two new companies: WEEE Ireland and the European Recycling Platform. These companies are financed through the system of Environmental Management Costs.

## Who sets the rate of Environmental Management Costs?

The visible Environmental Management Costs being applied currently were set by the approved producer compliance schemes and have been approved by an independent, industry based body, WEEE Register Society Ltd.

This system ensures that the monies collected for recycling are actually assigned for recycling activity and are not diverted elsewhere. Displaying the Environmental Management Costs serves a number of purposes:

- It shows consumers that they are dealing with a company that is involved in responsible recycling.
- It makes the scheme easier to police.
- It ensures that costs are shared equitably across all producers.

## Do Environmental Management Costs apply to all electrical and electronic goods?

No. Visible Environmental Management Costs do not apply to all goods. Medical equipment, toys and IT equipment (such as computers), telecommunications equipment and monitoring & control equipment do not carry Environmental Management Costs.

## Is this a new tax?

No! Environmental Management Costs are not imposed by Government.

The Environmental Management Costs are used to fund the operations of the two approved producer compliance schemes mentioned above, and which were set up by the electrical and electronics industry. These companies are required to operate on a not-for-profit basis.

The Environmental Management Costs are subject to independent audit and review by the WEEE Register, the independent body that has been established to oversee the registration of producers and to ensure that all producers are meeting their fair share of the costs of recycling.



## Why are Environmental Management Costs displayed?

The whole point of showing Environmental Management Costs is to ensure that the system is transparent.

Any retailer adding the Visible Environmental Management Costs at the till to the amount quoted either verbally or in writing (e.g. on a display stand, shelf ticketing, advertised) or not displaying the Visible

Environmental Management Costs in advertising and in-store signage is committing an offence both in the context of the WEEE Regulations and also under consumer legislation.

Retailers must describe visible Environmental Management Costs on receipts, shelf ticketing, advertisements etc. as "Producer Recycling Fund".

## Can recycling costs be added at the till to the price quoted or displayed?

No. The Irish WEEE Regulations require that the price of any item of electrical and electronic equipment quoted either verbally or in writing must be inclusive of the visible Environmental Management Cost.

***The price you pay must be no more than the price you see.***

## If there is a problem

- **If your retailer does not take back WEEE**, you should contact the Environment Section of the local authority where the retailer is based.
- **If your retailer adds the visible Environmental Management Costs at the till to the price displayed or quoted to you**, you should contact the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
Johnstown Castle  
Wexford.  
E-mail: [info@epa.ie](mailto:info@epa.ie)  
Lo-call: 1890 335 599



**The WEEE Directive is about protecting our environment.**

**REMEMBER YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE**



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