

Devin Denton
St. James Middle School

The Negative Effects of Electronic Waste

There have been many interesting proposals about what to do with the undeveloped land. Other community members would like to make a specialized landfill for technology; however I believe there are better alternatives. Electronic waste has been a growing concern in many parts of the world because of the environmental dangers that e-waste causes by being dumped in landfills. The proposal to build a special landfill for the disposal of used electronics would not be the best solution because of the lasting effects. I believe that there are better alternatives, such as recycling and reusing. A statement from an environmentalist reports that 75% of heavy metals found in landfills come from e-waste. (Olafisoye 4). Building a landfill for electronic devices would have a negative effect on the coastal region because of an increase in health problems, pollution of air and water, and the leaching of toxins into the soil.

Electronic devices are made up of many hazardous materials that when left in landfills, can cause negative effects on people's health. Electronic equipment contain dangerous metallic contaminants such as beryllium, cadmium, mercury, copper, and lithium (Monika, Kishore 2). Many medical experts have found that exposure to e-waste causes damage to your blood and body systems (Olafisoye 2). E-waste contains lead that is most vulnerable to children and could cause diseases or even death. Lead is easily absorbed and can enter the body through food, water, air and soil (Monika, Kishore 1). E-waste can cause damage to the nervous system, neural damage, and also the brain development of a child (Monika, Kishore 3). Researchers have found that people that work in e-waste dumps are constantly breathing in toxins which cause

inflammation, heart disease and cancer (“E-Waste Harms Human Health; New Research Details How”).

E-waste also causes many harmful effects on both the air and the water. The problem with heavy metals is that they do not break down and have many toxic effects on the environment. The pollutants from e-waste are washed into large bodies of water because of a cycle called runoff, which affects the levels of heavy metal concentrations as well as the nutrient concentration (Olafisoye 2). When performing a study on water samples in Nigeria, it was found that people using well water had significantly higher metal concentrations because of the pollution of the groundwater. The elevated levels of metals in the well water is a result of the e-waste from the dumpsite. Over 50% of the samples taken from residents close to the dumpsite had maximum levels of heavy metal contaminants. High levels of Pb in drinking water can result in many health concerns, such as tiredness, abdominal discomfort, and anemia (Olafisoye 4). Lead poisoning is among the most treacherous hazards of e-waste. The motherboard of televisions and computers contain high levels of lead that can cause lung cancer from the fumes that are released into the air. There are also dangers to the nervous system and can lead to respiratory disorders (“E-Waste problem, Hazards and solutions”).

The dangers of e-waste in the soil also causes many negative consequences. When e-waste gets into large bodies of water it can eventually travel to groundwater, which gets into a soil layer called topsoil, where most plants and animals are living and eating. We depend on water to fertilize plants and crops, but when e-waste gets into the soil it affects the crops, animals and plant life (Osuagwu 2). This eventually is harmful for people, who eat the crops and animals that have been contaminated. Various studies have shown that people living near e-waste recycling activities reported high levels of toxic heavy metals, contaminants in soil, surface

water, and groundwater. In effect, the residents had high occurrences of headache, skin damage and nausea (Monika, Kishore 1).

The effects of e-waste are such a great concern on many levels, yet others claim that building a landfill for electronic devices is a good idea because of the increasing need for more space to store the abundance of old electronics. Some believe that with extra land, it would help store the electronics for another 35 years; although it might seem like a good short term solution, the long term effects are much greater. The issue is that e-waste is much more of a problem for the air, soil and water, which affects the lives of millions of people through the food we eat, the water we drink and the air that we breathe into our lungs. There are much better alternatives that include recycling, reusing and breaking down the parts of computers and TVs to remove the hazardous material (“Computer Recycling”).

The hazardous nature of e-waste is one of the most rapidly growing environmental problems of the world. Building a landfill for electronic devices would have a negative effect on the coastal region because of the increase in health problems, air and water pollution, and toxins in the soil. E-waste is a serious concern for millions of people around the world because of the harmful toxins it leaves behind, therefore we must find other ways to dispose of electronics which are less harmful for our environment. There are many other solutions for old electronics, such as take-back programs that reuse old electronics, as well as recycle old parts. These programs are environmentally responsible and can help us in making our land, air and water less polluted by the negative effects that e-waste can cause by being dumped in our landfills.

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