Recycle old personal laptops and desktops safely [1]

September 8, 2025 by ES and UIS Communications [2]

When your personal laptop or desktop computer reaches its end of life, there are several options for recycling it. However, it is vital you take these steps to protect your personal data and properly dispose of your device.

NOTE: University-owned devices **must not be cleaned or recycled by employees**. After backing up your data and signing out of all accounts, you should return your work device to the UIS Service Desk to ensure proper handling and data security.

Best practices for erasing device data

1. Back up your data. Transfer important files to an external storage device, such as a USB hard drive or external SSD.

2. Sign out of all accounts. As an added precaution, sign out of all your desktop, web and other online accounts.

3. Remove all peripherals. This includes USB flash drives, keyboards, mice, speakers and other storage devices.

4. Wipe your hard drive. Depending on your storage device – Solid State Drive (SSD, common in newer devices) or Hard Disk Drive (HDD, common in older devices) – use a data wiping utility.

TIP: While data wiping utilities are generally satisfactory for personal usage, your data may still be recovered using advanced tools. Physically destroying the drive [3] guarantees your data is unrecoverable. Do your own research to determine how to do this safely; some recyclers offer free data destruction.

Recycling your device

After fully wiping your device, there are several options for recycling your device. Remember, disposing of electronics in normal landfill-bound trash collection is illegal in Colorado.

Retailers and device manufacturers often offer disposal programs. However, donating old devices to non-profits, schools and community organizations is a great way to repurpose your tech, minimize tech waste and contribute to critical technology access programs in your community.

Municipal electronic recycling programs and resources

- Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE) registered recyclers [4]

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