

Attorney General Raoul Offers Tips On Recycling, Donating Electronics Items

May 1 2023 9:49 AM



CHICAGO - As Illinois residents may contemplate recycling electronic items when spring cleaning their homes, Attorney General Raoul is encouraging them to take advantage of environmentally-friendly recycling programs and to be mindful of potential personally identifying information left on their smart devices.

“The proliferation of smart devices has transformed our lives in countless ways, including that people upgrade their devices more frequently,” Raoul said. “We must be

mindful, however, of the real environmental effects of e-waste and how to safely dispose of older electronic equipment while protecting sensitive personal information.”

Raoul reminds Illinoisans that it is illegal to throw many electronic devices in the trash and that older electronics – including televisions, computers, tablets, gaming systems and telephones – may contain chemicals that are harmful to the environment and human health if not properly disposed of and specially processed.

If a device cannot be donated, Raoul recommends individuals utilize the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency’s [list of electronics recyclers](#) to find local drop-off sites or to schedule a pickup. The [United States Environmental Protection Agency](#) also offers information on certified electronics recyclers, such as [e-Stewards](#) and [Sustainable Electronics Recycling International](#), which have demonstrated they meet specific standards for safe recycling and management. In addition, consumers upgrading their smart phones can often sell or trade in their current device to the manufacturer or an electronics retailer.

If donating or recycling an electronics item, Raoul urges consumers to be mindful of newer smart devices that often save personal data that could be used by identity thieves. Raoul recommends people take the following steps before donating an electronics item:

- **Back up and store any personal information you want to save.** Data can be transferred directly to a new device or stored on an external storage device like a flash drive, external hard drive or on a cloud-based storage service.
- **Log out of all apps and accounts.** If you discard the device that you use as your primary device for banking or social media apps, make sure to change that designation to your new device.
- **Unpair any smart devices like watches or headphones.**
- **Remove any attached storage mechanism if applicable.** Memory cards, like SD or microSD cards, as well as SIM cards may contain photos, media files and app data that thieves can use to obtain personal information about you. SIM cards may also contain your phone number and personal contacts. If your device is older and has internal storage as well as a memory card – common on some older digital cameras – you may need to connect the device to your computer via USB and delete those files manually.
- **Remove the hard drive of a laptop or computer.** After removing the hard drive, you can then install this drive into your new computer. You can also put it in a USB hard drive enclosure to be used for back-up or portable storage.
- **If you do not want to remove the hard drive, wipe the laptop or computer to delete your data, making it harder for identity thieves to retrieve.** Many computers already have a built-in mechanism to shred or erase files or the whole drive. Visit your manufacturer’s website for specific instructions.

- **Erase all stored information and reset settings to factory settings.** After backing up all of your information, return your device to its factory settings to delete all of the data. Check your user manual or go to the manufacturer's website for specific instructions.
- **Determine how to perform a factory reset or reset to initial settings on your smart TV, as well.** Check within the settings option on your TV, or search online for step-by-step instructions. A factory reset deletes all accumulated data in the television and not just the cache within the apps.

If you believe you have been the victim of identity theft or other fraud, Raoul encourages you to file a complaint on the [Attorney General's website](#), call the toll-free Identity Theft Hotline at 866-999-5630, or call one of the Attorney General's Consumer Fraud Hotlines:

1-800-386-5438 (Chicago)
1-800-243-0618 (Springfield)
1-800-243-0607 (Carbondale)
1-866-310-8398 (Spanish-language hotline)