

Proper Disposal

Refrigerated Household Appliances

A Guide to Doing it right in Lawrence and Mercer Counties



What Appliances may Contain Refrigerants?

Refrigerators, freezers, air conditioners, dehumidifiers, water coolers, and vending machines.

What is a Refrigerant?

A Refrigerant is a substance used for cooling. These include Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs—phased out in 1994), Hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs—phased out in 2010), and Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). Freon, a registered trademark of The Chemours Company, is a type of CFC refrigerant.

What are the Environmental Concerns about Refrigerants?

CFCs and HCFCs are ozone-depleting substances as well as potent greenhouse gases. HFCs are greenhouse gases.

What are the Regulations Pertaining to Refrigerants?

- Intentionally venting refrigerant is prohibited.
- Technicians must do their best to recapture, recycle and dispose of refrigerant safely.
- Appliances that use refrigerant must be disposed of according to the EPA's disposal rules.
- Leaks must be repaired within 30 days.
- Only licensed heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) companies and technicians can purchase refrigerant.

Why should I care about Proper Appliance Disposal?

That old fridge or freezer is taking up space in your garage or basement. Replacing it could save you up to \$50 a year in energy costs and there are significant benefits for the environment and your community as well. Specifically, the proper disposal of an old fridge or freezer will:

- Reduce your household energy consumption, which will save you money and prevent greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions,
- Avoid the release of ozone depleting substances (ODS) and GHGs, which contribute to ozone depletion and climate change,
- Save landfill space and energy by recycling—rather than landfilling—the metals, plastics, and glass contained in your appliance,
- Avoid the release of used oil, which can cause damage to the liver, brain, immune system, and reproductive system,
- Avoid the release of mercury, which can lead to impairment of neurological development and other problems associated with the human nervous system,
- Avoid the release of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), which can have carcinogenic and non-cancerous health effects.

Do Household Appliances have Hazardous Components?

Depending on how old the appliance is, it may contain used oil, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and mercury. Some units manufactured prior to 2000 have mercury containing components and those manufactured before 1979 may contain PCBs.

How do I dispose of my Refrigerated Household Appliance in an Environmental Friendly Way?

- **Retailer Disposal Program.** One of the easiest and most convenient ways to dispose of an older unit is to use a retailer disposal program when you purchase a new model. Many retailers offer this service. Another benefit—you don't have to work to remove the unit yourself.
- **Bounty Program.** Periodically, electric companies will accept appliances through a bounty program, where you are paid a bounty for your unit. Be sure to check with your electric company and any requirements they have (i.e. the appliance must be in working order, meet dimension requirements, etc.)
- **Scrap Yards/Metal Recyclers.** Most local scrap yards will accept appliances, including refrigerant-containing units. Make sure you verify any requirements the scrap yard may have, such as having the refrigerant removed beforehand or not accepting items such as dehumidifiers that contain a lot of plastic.
- **Special Collections.** Contact the Lawrence-Mercer Recycling/Solid Waste Department to get the latest schedule.
- **Municipal/Hauler Programs.** Municipal programs are sometimes available, usually where a municipality has a contract with a single hauler. Additionally, some haulers also offer this service so be sure to check with your hauler.

Special Notes

Like most trash and recycling programs, there is usually a cost associated with refrigerant containing appliance recycling. This is due to proper management of the refrigerant and the bulky nature of the items.

Some programs require the refrigerant removed beforehand. Contact your HVAC technician to determine if they offer this service. Be aware that the stickers that are often used as removal verification are not valid unless it consists of a signed statement that includes the name and address of the person who recovered it and the date that it was removed.



Recycling/Solid Waste Department

For questions or more information, check out our website www.co.lawrence.pa.us/recycling and Facebook page or contact us directly at 724-658-6925.

This publication is funded in part through a grant from the PA Department of Environmental Protection.