

Going Green in Londonderry

What Kind of Greeting Are You Sending?

Choosing a holiday greeting card used to be simple: a paper card that was serious or funny with words and/or pictures. Fun to give or get, easy to recycle. Now, “thanks” to technology, we have the choice of talking, singing and musical greeting cards! They may be kept a little longer than a plain old paper card, but eventually the batteries wear out and the fun fades away.

Then what to do with it--throw it out? Try to recycle it? Ever taken one of those cards apart to see what it contains? Whoa! Some of the components that make those cards sing and dance include:

- Batteries – up to three batteries per card, some including **mercury**...something we don't want to add to the environment.
- Speakers – these contain combinations of metals, plastic and magnets (only useful as refrigerator magnets now!)
- Circuit boards – comprised of resistors, capacitors, lead solder, plastics and metals.
- LED lights and the wires that go to them – they ensure the disco ball lights up!
- Unidentifiable pieces of plastic – these enable a paper hamster to dance.

As you can see, these cards contain a whole lot more than just a pleasant greeting; they could contain **hazardous waste**. If you receive one of these cards and discover **mercury**-containing batteries (look for a Hg symbol on the battery), put them aside and bring to the Drop Off Center (Saturdays, April – November). The paper can be recycled but the rest, Unfortunately, must go in the trash – what a hassle!

Next time you need a card for a special someone, consider the environmental impact. Won't an old fashioned card—or perhaps a virtual electronic card you can email—do the job just as well, and create a lot less waste? For more information on the effects of mercury on the environment, go to www.des.nh.gov.

~ Courtesy of Londonderry's Solid Waste and Environment Committee and the NH Dept. of Environmental Services.