



RECYCLE MY CELL PHONE CAMPAIGN FACT SHEET AND CONTACT LIST

About the Campaign

Recycle My Cell Phone is a campaign to significantly increase the rate of cell phone recycling in America. Their goal is to recycle 500,000 cell phones over the next twelve months, bringing the total number of cell phones recycled to one million or double the current annual U.S. rate.

Today, less than 2% of cell phones are being recycled. In the end, they want cell phone recycling to be as common as glass bottle recycling.

- By drastically increasing cell phone recycling rates, the campaign seeks to keep toxic metals out of landfills, save energy and reduce the number of new open-pit mines—because phones that cannot be used will be recycled for gold, copper and other valuable metals.
- Recycle My Cell Phone is an initiative made up of a coalition of diverse partners that includes non-profits, schools, universities, and companies.
- Every cell phone collected for the campaign is sent to CollectiveGood to be refurbished and resold abroad or to be recycled in accordance with EPA guidelines. CollectiveGood has signed on to the "Electronics Recycler's Pledge of True Stewardship," the world's most rigorous environmental and social justice criteria for recycling electronic waste. They do not work with recyclers that export hazardous waste to developing countries, dump hazardous waste in municipal landfills or use prison labor.
- The largest market for refurbished cell phones is Latin America and the Caribbean, although many are sold in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. CollectiveGood currently collects about 15,000 phones per month of which about half are refurbished. The majority of the refurbished phones are sold for reuse outside the United States.
- In addition to protecting the environment, when people recycle their cell phone through the Recycle My Cell Phone Campaign, they will help increase public awareness about cell phone recycling and help EARTHWORKS and its partners raise funds to support their charitable programs. Each cell phone collected earns participating nonprofits \$1 on average.

Why Recycle?

A 2004 EPA-commissioned report recommended that cell phones be classified as hazardous waste because of the lead they contain. If thrown in the trash and sent to incinerators or landfills, environmental contamination can occur from combustion and leaching into soil and groundwater. For more on the report by University of Florida environmental engineering associate professor Tim Townsend, visit: <http://www.collectivegood.com/news.asp#Mobile>



Cell Phone Waste Facts and Figures

- The EPA estimates cell phones will be thrown away at a rate of 130 million a year by 2005 that equals 65,000 tons of waste containing toxic metals.
- There are more than 500 million used cell phones in the U.S. sitting in people's drawers or in landfills.
- According to a study by the research group INFORM, early efforts by commercial and non-profit corporations to recycle cell phones have led to the collection of only 2.5 million phones from 1999 through early 2003. Thus, cell phones are currently being recycled at rate of approximately 600,000 per year.¹

Government Action

- The European Union (EU) has mandated that starting on July 1, 2006, new cell phones and other electrical and electronic products sold in any EU member states must not contain lead and several other particularly hazardous substances.²
- Last year, California became the first state in the nation to require cell phone recycling. The “Cell Phone Recycling Act of 2004” requires cell phone retailers to have a recycling program in place by July 1, 2006.

Gold

Mining, and gold mining in particular, is one of the world’s dirtiest industries, but gold is also the most profitable mineral recovered from discarded cell phones. Recapturing gold through the recycling process would lessen the need for new mining while providing compensation for recyclers.

If all of the estimated 130 million cell phones that will be discarded in the U.S. this year were recycled, they would yield about 202,000 ounces of gold, according to EARTHWORKS. That is two times the annual gold production at the Zortman-Landusky mine; an operation that left a legacy of pollution and devastation for the Native American tribes that live adjacent to the site.

Sources:

1. "Waste in the Wireless World: The Challenge of Cell Phones," Bette K. Fishbein. An exhaustive study of the problem published last June by INFORM, a nonprofit environmental research organization. <http://www.informinc.org/wirelesswaste.php>
2. “Calling All Cell Phones: Collection, Reuse, and Recycling Programs in the U.S.,” Eric Most. This report, which follows up on “Waste in the Wireless World,” addresses four key programs now under way in the US to collect, refurbish, and recycle used cell phones. http://www.informinc.org/calling_cellphones.php



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