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SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

Ever Wonder What's Happened to the More Than 570 Million iPhones Sold Since 2007?

Lorraine Chow | February 24, 2016 12:05 pm | [Comments](#)

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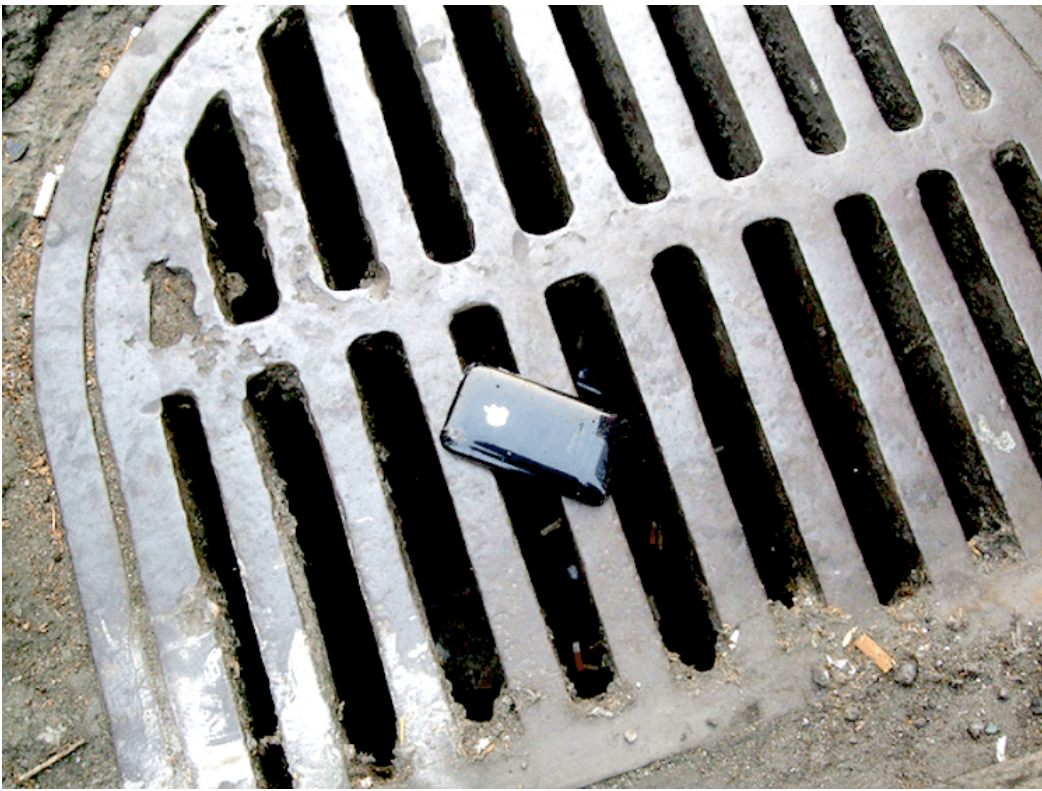
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What happens when electronics come to the end of their useful life? For the vast majority of these devices, they either collect dust somewhere in our homes or offices or get sent to the landfill. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, only **12.5 percent** of **electronic waste**, or e-waste, is recycled in the U.S.


Bloomberg recently dug into **Apple's** e-waste problem—namely the fate of the more than 570 million smartphones that have been sold since the first generation iPhone debuted in Jan. 9, 2007—and found that the tech giant has collected more than 40,000 tons of e-waste in 2014, recovering enough steel to lay 100 miles of railway track.



Apple has sold 570 million iPhones in the past 9 years. What happens to these phones when they reach the end of the road? Photo credit: [Flickr](#)

It's clear that our increasingly digital world has left a **shocking impact on our planet**. These gadgets require a **massive amount of energy** to manufacture and its potentially hazardous components can have a toxic and even **deadly** imprint on planetary inhabitants.

With a growing number of smartphones, computers and tablets piling up in our drawers or the landfill, United Nations officials **estimated** that the volume of e-waste generated worldwide is expected to climb by 33 percent by 2017 to 65 million tons.

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UN officials estimate the volume of e-waste generated worldwide is expected to climb by 33 percent by 2017. Valentino Bellini's ongoing ecowatch.com

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Apple will have to face this mounting e-waste catastrophe as each **new product** comes along. However, as Lisa Jackson, Apple's vice president of environment, policy and social initiatives told Bloomberg, Apple has led the industry in recycling efforts:

In the electronics recycling business, the benchmark is to try to collect and recycle 70 percent, by weight, of the devices

produced seven years earlier. Jackson says Apple exceeds that, typically reaching 85 percent, including recycling some non-Apple products that customers bring in.

That means it will have to get hold of and destroy the equivalent of more than 9 million of 2009's iPhone 3GS models this year around the world. With iPhone sales climbing to 155 million units last fiscal year, grinding up Apple products is a growth business.

Apple has a [free reuse and recycling program](#) that allows users to turn in their old iPhones, iPads or computers (Mac or PC) for Apple gift cards if the device qualifies for reuse. If it doesn't qualify for reuse, Apple will recycle it at no cost to the consumer.

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We have a huge disconnect as to what happens to our 'trash'. In the USA, we average 4.5 lbs of 'trash' per person per day. It's a generational reinforcement thinking Otto the garbage guy comes and picks it up 2-3 times a week, I pay someone to provide this service, so it no longer is my problem.

The reality is the vast majority of the 3K+ landfills in the USA are very close to being full.

IMO, reduce, compost, reuse and recycle. Most of my trash is recycle and gets sorted and handled appropriately. I compost, and the remainder ends up as trash (food packaging and the like, which btw can become biodegradable with sustainable, hemp-based plastics). I typically dispose of a medium-sized biobag with trash once a month. I'm always looking for ways to improve.

What can't be recycled should be required to be reused by manufacturers. What do we do when the landfills are closed due to being full???? We have to consciously buy things built to last and select products having a small footprint and break the chains.

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Great job guy. Know that at least one other person appreciates what you are doing (if it helps).

But I'm sure you've already recognized that these sorts of actions which arise from deeper understanding of ourselves and our world lead to a more joyful, full and grateful life.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



empirical evidence guy → WeGotta · a day ago

Indeed. Sustainability hit me like a freight train a few years ago while taking an Ayurveda seminar.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



mike hamblett · 2 days ago

I find it impossible to transfer names addresses and numbers from old phones, hence they're kept as notebooks. Any advice on transferring data?

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