

Cell Phones

Why we care

Over the past 40 years, cell phones have become an integral part of the way we live. In fact, according to a U.N. study, more people worldwide have access to cell phones than toilets! We can all agree that cell phones are a valuable tool; but take a minute to consider the impact:

- **Raw Materials:** Mining the gold for a ***single mobile phone*** generates 220 pounds of waste. The average American replaces her phone every 18 months, *long* before the five-year average lifespan, and millions of old phones are sitting in drawers instead of being reused or recycled.
- **Hazardous Waste:** Phones contain heavy metals, such as lead, mercury, and cadmium, which can leach into landfills. When recycled, workers and the environment can be exposed to these hazardous materials.
- **Energy Use:** An iPhone can consume as much electricity as a modern refrigerator if you count the energy used in the data centers that keep you connected.

Simple, positive steps

- **First**, keep your cell phone usable as long as you can. If it breaks, check online tutorials on how to fix it yourself. If you switch to a new provider, ask to keep your current phone.
- **Second**, when giving up an old phone, donate it for reuse rather than recycling. For example, SW Community Center and Free Geek donate phones for reuse. Call Metro at (503) 234-3000 and ask for a site that accepts phones for reuse.
- **Finally**, it can't be repaired or reused, recycle your phone so that valuable components can be retrieved. Go to Metro's [website](#) and type in "cell phones."

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at jeanne@earthleaders.org.