



Cell Phone Recycling Report Card

Surveying Methodology and Grading Criteria

EARTHWORKS' Recycle My Cell Phone Campaign Cell Phone Recycling Report Card addresses cell phone recycling from the perspective of a wireless customer wishing to responsibly dispose of their old phone.

The review centers around the efforts of cell phone service providers, as their business model requires long-term relationships with consumers. In particular, the review focuses on the visibility and scale of the providers' take-back programs, as well their recycling and refurbishing standards.

Grades were determined based on the accessibility of recycling information available to the companies' customers (via websites, retail stores, telephone customer service support and phone packaging and labeling) and on surveys of wireless customers and corporate contacts of each of the major cell phone service providers reviewed.

I. PROGRAM VISIBILITY

A. Website Evaluation

Websites were evaluated for the presence and visibility of background information on each company's take-back program.

Grading Criteria:

- A** – Prominent link to program on front page
- B** – Direct link to program but not prominent
- C** – Program only easily accessible by search function
- D** – No search function, difficult to access information
- F** – No info on website

B. Retail Store Visits

By using each website's online store locator, ten visits to each service provider's retail stores were made in the Washington, DC, and Tucson, Arizona metropolitan areas. Researchers investigated the following:

- Presence of cell phone collection receptacle



- Placement/visibility of materials on recycling
- Staff knowledge of program

Grading Criteria:

Retail store visit grades were based on a combination of the score received for presence of collection receptacle and the score received for visibility of receptacle. The average of these scores was awarded the following grades:

- A** - 80% or higher
- B** – 79-70%
- C** - 69%-60%
- D** – 59%-1%
- F** – 0%

C. Customer Service Phone Calls

Thirty random calls were made to each service provider’s customer support number to gauge representatives’ knowledge of their recycling program and ability to provide accurate information to someone who wants to recycle a cell phone. Responses from representatives were placed in one of the following categories:

- Aware of program and correct details
- Aware of program but did not know details
- Not aware of program but found correct information
- Not aware of program and did not find information

Grading Criteria:

- A** - 90% or higher provided information on program
- B** – 89-80% provided information on program
- C** - 79%-70% provided information on program
- D** – 69%-60% provided information on program
- F** – Less than 60% provided information on program

D. Labeling/Packaging

Researchers inspected several widely-used models of phones affiliated with the leading service providers and their packaging for recycling information.

Grading Criteria:

- A “Pass” grade was given if recycling information or a logo was present on a phone or packaging.
- A “Fail” grade was given if recycling information or a logo was present on a phone or packaging.



E. Public Knowledge

A web-based consumer survey was distributed to EARTHWORKS' online membership list to gain an understanding of the perception of industry recycling efforts among one segment of the cell-phone using public. 1,046 individuals responded to the following questions over a one week period:

1. Who is your current cell phone service provider?
 - a. Cingular
 - b. Sprint
 - c. T-Mobile
 - d. Verizon Wireless
 - e. Don't Know
 - f. Other (please specify)

2. Are you aware if your cell phone service provider offers a take-back or recycling program to deal with retired cell phones?
 - a. Yes, I am aware that they provide one
 - b. No, I am not aware if they provide one

3. If you are aware that your service provider offers a take-back/recycling program, how did you first hear about it?
 - a. Verbally informed by sales representative at time of purchase
 - b. Information on packaging or in other materials (contract, etc.) supplied at time of purchase
 - c. Notified by company after termination of service
 - d. By visiting their website
 - e. By contacting the company (by phone, email or visit to store)
 - f. A friend or family member
 - g. Other (please specify)

4. Have you ever returned a retired cell phone to a service provider for refurbishing/recycling?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

5. If yes, how would you rate the ease of returning the phone?
 - a. Not easy
 - b. Easy
 - c. Very easy
 - d. N/A



6. If you are aware of a program, are you also familiar with the company's environmental and social standards for recycling/refurbishing?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. N/A

7. How concerned are you with the environmental and social standards that a recycler adheres to when processing retired cell phones?
 - a. Not concerned
 - b. Somewhat concerned
 - c. Very concerned

8. In general, how satisfied are you with the wireless industry's efforts to take-back and recycle retired cell phones?
 - a. Not satisfied
 - b. Somewhat satisfied
 - c. Very satisfied

9. Please share any comments you may have regarding cell phone recycling.

II. RECYCLING/REFURBISHING PROCESS

Electronics Recycler's Pledge of True Stewardship

The Recycler's Pledge is the world's most rigorous environmental and social justice criteria for recycling e-waste.

Grading Criteria:

- A "Pass" grade was given if a service provider uses a recycler that has signed the Recycler's Pledge.
- A "Fail" grade was given if a service provider does not use a recycler that has signed the Recycler's Pledge.



III. COLLECTION PROGRAM

A. Public Data Available on Take-Back Programs

Researchers reviewed service providers' websites, sent emails and made phone calls to media representatives, and questioned customer service phone representatives about the number of phones collected by each program.

Grading Criteria:

- A "Yes" grade was given if data was available from service providers
- A "No" grade was given if data was not available from service providers

B. Customer Satisfaction with Service Providers

Percentages were based on responses to web survey (see above) question #8: "In general, how satisfied are you with the wireless industry's efforts to take-back and recycle retired cell phones?"

C. Number of Phones Collected in Most Recent Fiscal Year

Number of phones collected was based on either information provided by service providers or from other research published on cell phone recycling.

D. Total Service Contracts

Figures on service contracts were obtained from company websites and SEC filings.

E. Percent of U.S. Market

Percentages were calculated based on total service contract figures (see above) and total national subscriptions (as reported by the wireless trade association CTIA).

F. Corporate Questionnaires

To supplement publicly-available information, a questionnaire was sent to representatives from each service provider that works on cell phone take-back programs with a postage-paid reply envelope included. The following questions were asked:

1. To date, how many handsets have been recycled/refurbished through your program?



How Your Program Works

2. How are cell phones collected by your program?
 - a. Can people drop off their cell phones in one of your stores to be recycled or refurbished? Yes No
 - b. Can people mail in their cell phones to be recycled or refurbished? Yes No
 - c. If so, who is responsible for the shipping charges?

3. Is information about the recycling program included in the materials that accompany a purchase? Yes No
4. Is information about the recycling program included on the packaging material, inside the packaging, or directly on the handset (e.g. recycling symbols, instructions, web addresses, etc)? Yes No
5. Are customer service employees trained to answer questions about the recycling program? Yes No
6. Are customer service employees trained to actively promote the recycling program? Yes No
7. Are there other methods that you've used to promote your recycling program?

Processing the Phones

8. Who processes the actual handsets, i.e. who performs the refurbishing and/or recycling?
9. What happens to refurbished phones?
10. If a phone cannot be refurbished, how is it dealt with?
11. If the phone is recycled, under what environmental standards does the recycler operate? For example, have they signed the "Electronic Recycler's Pledge of True Stewardship?"
12. What is the recycler's stance on exporting hazardous waste?
13. What is the recycler's stance on sources of labor for processing the phones?