

Tip of the month January 2024

How to reduce your smartphone's carbon footprint

Computers and mobile phones between them create the equivalent of 1.5% of the world's carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) emissions. Did you know that, including the internet, computers contribute 3.7% of all global CO₂ emissions, equivalent to all the airlines together.

An increasing contributor to this are smartphones (quite apart from the rare elements that go into them).

According to researchers from McMaster University in Canada, the carbon emissions linked to smartphone use have grown so much that they now dwarf the emissions contributed by PCs or laptops. The actual figures? Globally, they've gone from 17 to 125 million tons of CO₂e per year in the decade from 2010 to 2020, a 730% increase!

Most of the carbon emissions from a smartphone are during manufacture. Apple state that the production cost of an iPhone 12 Pro is 82kg of CO₂e. This represents 86% of its overall emissions, with our usage contributing just 15%.

This being the case, the most eco friendly approach, short of not owning one, is to ensure that the phone continues to be used for as long as possible.

A smartphone currently has an average life span of 2 years 7 months. Only 1% of smartphones currently get recycled! Many factors affect a smartphone's lifespan, including the condition of the screen, the hardware, and the battery's health. We should be aiming for a life span of at least 5 years, ideally longer.

Phone plans that encourage users to get a new smartphone every two years accelerate the rate at which older models become obsolete and leads to an extraordinary and unnecessary amount of waste.

Since the end of 2021 all smartphones sold in the UK must be unlocked, making them easier to pass on to someone else.

So, **the tip of this month is to extend the life of your phone** either by continuing to use it for longer, making sure that you give or sell your perfectly good phone when you feel you must have the next model, or even buy a second hand phone... **and take good care of your smartphone!**

Harry Baumer