

# Ask Amy

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## Recycling Old Cell Phones

*What can I do with my old cell phone when I get a new one?* MM, Rome, NY

There are many options for what you can do with your old cell phone when you upgrade to a new one and NONE of them involve giving away a functional cell phone with a working battery to be used as a toy!

What people do not know is that a cell phone, even if no longer connected to a plan or containing a SIM card, can still dial 911 for emergencies if it has power. We've had hundreds of calls over the years by babies, young children and even the mentally challenged. They were given the old cell phones to play with consequently resulting in the child calling into the 911 center numerous times until either the battery runs out, the dispatcher is able to get the child to hand the phone over to an adult or we are able to track the phone and contact the owner another way such as sending a police officer over to investigate, etc. This is not only a waste of time for the dispatcher who often has to decipher whether there is an actual emergency on the line but also for the resources that have to be dispatched to check the area.

If it is discovered that the child is maliciously calling and harassing 911 or falsely reporting incidents, it can be a prosecutable offense which may be punishable with a fine or jail time. Also, civil fines may be issued to the parents of young callers repeatedly dialing 911 without good reason or while playing on the phone. ([http://www.popcenter.org/problems/911\\_abuse/3](http://www.popcenter.org/problems/911_abuse/3))

On a positive note, there are many programs that take old cell phones and recycle them in various ways to benefit different charities.

[www.CellPhonesforSoldiers.com](http://www.CellPhonesforSoldiers.com)

Cell Phones for Soldiers Inc. is a family-run nonprofit organization founded by 12 and 13 year old Robbie and Brittany Bergquist of Norwell, MA. It is dedicated to providing free communication services to active-duty military members and veterans. Every \$5 monetary contribution or donated device valued at \$5, will provide troops with 2.5 hours of FREE talk time. Since its inception in 2004, this program has provided more than 200 million minutes of free talk time and has recycled more than 11 million cell phones reducing the impact on landfills.

[www.NCADV.org](http://www.NCADV.org)

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence works to eliminate domestic violence, empower battered women and children, promote and unify direct service programs, alert and educate the public and promote partnerships. This agency collects used cell phones and select digital electronics to be refurbished and sold or broken down and recycled for parts. Monies raised fund educational programming working to end domestic violence, cosmetic and reconstructive surgery programs that provide free services to victims of domestic violence that bear the scars of physical abuse and job skills building and financial education projects that help victims of violence get on their feet.

[www.ShelterAlliance.net](http://www.ShelterAlliance.net)

Shelter Alliance contributes \$30 or more to domestic violence shelters in your local area for each recycled phone and other select electronic devices. It is the largest cell phone recycling program in the US and participants have earned over \$10 million since 2001. This agency also provides fundraising options to specifically target a shelter in need.

[www.Sprint.com/responsibility/communities\\_across/project\\_connect.html](http://www.Sprint.com/responsibility/communities_across/project_connect.html)

Sprint Project Connect collects and recycles cell phones, batteries, data cards and accessories. Along with keeping millions of phones out of landfills, the net proceeds from all equipment collected fund and promote free internet safety resources for children, parents and educators.

[www.AmericanCellPhoneDrive.org](http://www.AmericanCellPhoneDrive.org)

This is an organization devoted to the socially responsible reuse of retired cell phones and components. They can be used as fundraisers for schools and charitable organizations while keeping the hazardous materials found in cell phones out of landfills. Used by over 5,000 local and national charitable organizations.

These are just a few of the organizations that I found on a quick internet search that recycle old cell phones and provide a much better use for them than giving them to children to play with. Go Green - RECYCLE and help out some great causes!