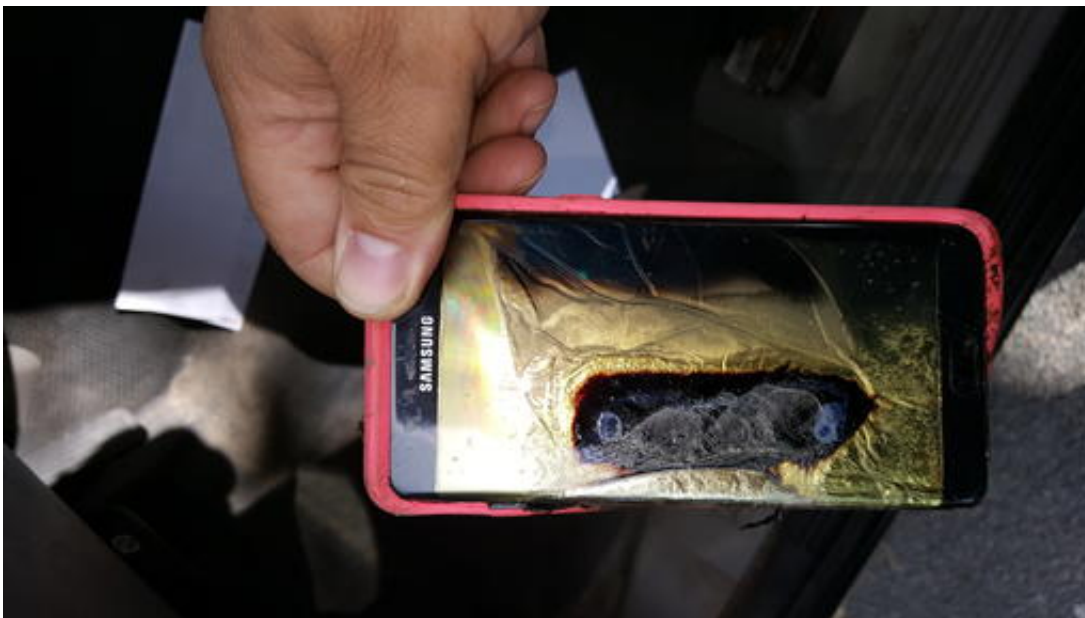


Worried about your Samsung Note 7? Here are your options

October 10 2016, by Bree Fowler



This Friday, Oct. 7, 2016, photo provided by Andrew Zuis, of Farmington, Minn., shows the replacement Samsung Galaxy Note 7 phone belonging to his 13-year-old daughter Abby, that melted in her hand earlier in the day. "She's done with Note 7s right now," Zuis said of his daughter. Reports of more replacement phones catching fire are trickling in, and the South Korean tech giant faces more scrutiny after earlier criticism for being slow to react and sending confusing signals in the first days of the recall. (Andrew Zuis via AP)

Worries about the safety of Samsung's replacement Galaxy Note 7 smartphones have consumers fretting about what to do. And they're getting little guidance from the company.

U.S. regulators ordered a recall of the original Note 7, a huge phone-bordering-on-tablet with a huge battery, in late September after the devices demonstrated an unwelcome tendency to catch fire. Now, following reports that the company's replacement versions have also overheated or caught fire, Samsung says it is "temporarily adjusting" Note 7 production to "ensure quality and safety matters."

But it neither confirmed nor denied a previous report by South Korea's Yonhap news agency that it has suspended production of the phones. Samsung said it's investigating the recent fires, while working with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

A commission spokesman said Monday that his agency is investigating five new incidents since the recall was announced, although it hasn't confirmed whether they all involved phones that were distributed as replacements for devices involved in the recall.

The four major U.S. mobile carriers, meanwhile, have all suspended trade-ins for the replacement phones; so have major retailers such as Best Buy. Instead, these companies are offering to swap Note 7s out for any other smartphone of the customer's choice.

Here's a look at the options for Note 7 owners.

SWAP FOR A DIFFERENT SAMSUNG PHONE

Samsung's equivalent phones are mostly, well, old. If you just dropped several hundred dollars on the latest Samsung device, do you really want to trade it for last year's model?

One option is Samsung's Galaxy S smartphone, which is slightly smaller

and cheaper than the Note. While it has many of the same features of the Note, it lacks a stylus and the Note 7's iris scanner. The phone also came out in March, which might render it perilously close to middle-aged where cutting-edge types are concerned.

An older version of the Note is also an option, though also a disappointing one, given that the Note 5 (there was no Note 6) launched more than a year ago. Many Note 7 owners may already own one, or recently traded theirs in to get the Note 7.

Corey Nahman, a 56-year-old salesman for a drug company in Long Island, anxiously awaited the arrival of the Note 7 and excitedly bought \$150 worth of accessories to go with it.

The Samsung loyalist also owns a Samsung tablet, TV and washer and dryer. Now he has a replacement Note 7 but isn't sure what he's supposed to do with it.

"I'm not angry at them," he says. "I'm more annoyed that nobody knows what's going on."



A visitor tries out a Samsung Electronics Galaxy Note 7 smartphone at the company's shop in Seoul in Seoul, South Korea, Monday, Oct. 10, 2016. Samsung Electronics has temporarily halted production of its Galaxy Note 7 smartphones, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported Monday, following reports that replacements for the fire-prone phones were also overheating. (AP Photo/Ahn Young-joon)

Nahman says he loves the Note 7, but he's getting a lot of pressure from his wife to swap out his phone, maybe for the Google Pixel XL. In the meantime he's being careful not to charge his phone overnight. He turns it off completely before bed.

SWAP FOR A PHONE MADE BY SOMEONE ELSE

Google's new Pixel phones are coming out later this month, while LG and HTC also have large Android smartphones of varying ages on the market.

Apple's iPhone 7 also recently launched, and has been fairly well received even though it no longer features the standard headphone jack. That means Note 7 owners would need adapters for their old earbuds; they might also find it jarring to switch from an Android phone to the iPhone.

John Blackshear, an academic dean at Duke University, was a Samsung loyalist. He swapped his Note 7—the third Galaxy Note he's had—for the replacement version in September. But after hearing reports of problems with the replacement Note 7s, he traded in that phone for an iPhone 7 Plus on Friday.

But his wife, who also has a replacement Note 7, hasn't swapped hers because she likes it so much and relies on it for her job at Duke, he says.

"I don't know if it's a big deal or not," Blackshear says. "We haven't gotten anything from Verizon or Samsung. There haven't been emails or calls. I want to get something official."

In the meantime, he says he and his wife are keeping the phone stored in high places where his three young children can't grab it.

WAIT IT OUT

The obvious downside: Potential overheating and fire for those who insist on using their Note 7s. If you have an older phone lying around that you could reactivate for a while, this might not be a bad choice. Just

make sure to power the Note 7 down before tossing it in a drawer.

It's possible that company and government investigations will determine that the fires, at least those involving the replacement phones, were just isolated incidents. Or Samsung might release another replacement phone that's actually safe before long.

It's too early to tell. In the meantime, better safe than sorry.

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