Five-year-old Fairphone 2 getting updated to almost three-year-old Android 9

Sustainable smartphone manufacturer Fairphone has gotten Google's certification for its Android 9 update for the Fairphone 2. Getting certification for a nearly three-year-old version of Android doesn't sound that impressive until you realize that it's running on a phone originally released five years ago when it ran Android 5. The roll-out of the software starts today, and will continue until April 18th, Fairphone says.

It's a length of support that's basically unheard of among Android phone manufacturers. Although Fairphone 2 owners aren't going to be able to enjoy the latest Android 11 features, the more important thing is that they're running a version of Android that's still officially supported. Google's latest Android security bulletin from this month includes multiple fixes for security issues in Android 9.

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The Fairphone 2's Android 9 update has been in the works for a while and was released in beta way back in June 2020. At the time, Fairphone outlined the challenges it had in trying to support such an old phone, including the fact that Qualcomm no longer provides support for the processor inside the device, a Snapdragon 801, which originally announced back in 2014.

"To get Google certification for Android 9 for Fairphone 2 just as we hit five years of support for the smartphone is a huge achievement for Fairphone," says CEO of Fairphone Eva

Gouwens. “In order to get certification, we had to pass approximately 477,000 Google tests.”

“We want to show the industry that this kind of thing is possible, that a smartphone doesn’t have to be discarded after 2-3 years, we can prolong it’s lifespan,” the CEO added.

The only other smartphone manufacturer that offers a similar length of support for its devices is Apple, which last year released iOS 14, its latest phone OS, for its 2015 iPhone 6S. Android manufacturers, while behind Apple, are improving. Samsung now offers four years of security updates for its recent Galaxy devices, while Google offers three years of updates for its Pixel phones, and OnePlus says it plans to release Android 11 for its 2018 OnePlus 6 and 6T.

The Fairphone 2’s update to Android 9 this long after release bodes well for the company’s long-term support of its more recent Fairphone 3 and 3 Plus phones. The company says the phones should be updated to Android 11 in the second half of this year, with “one more major Android upgrade” coming thereafter. Software support and spare parts availability is set to continue until 2024.

https://www.theverge.com/2021/3/25/22349953/fairphone-2-android-9-update-sustainable-long-term-support