Qualcomm’s new Snapdragon 865 flagship is here — without integrated 5G

Qualcomm has officially announced its next-generation flagship processor for phones — the Snapdragon 865 — but it’ll still need a separate 5G modem to enable 5G instead of an integrated 5G modem built right into the chipset. Traditionally, that means more expensive, power-hungry phones than an integrated solution.

Announced alongside the 865 is Qualcomm’s other new processor, the Snapdragon 765, which *will* feature integrated 5G. However, it’ll be part of a less powerful processor than the 865, which will likely power the next wave of Android flagships in 2020.

Qualcomm has been teasing that it would offer Snapdragon chips with integrated 5G modems since February. It even confirmed at IFA 2019 that it would be offering a 700-series processor with integrated 5G. But it’s still odd that Qualcomm would choose the less powerful chip to serve as its initial integrated 5G product, leaving the next-generation mobile standard as a separate (albeit mandatory) component for its top-of-the-line flagship 865 model.

Instead, the Snapdragon 865 will offer 5G support in a similar manner as the current-generation 855, by requiring a separate 5G modem (in this case, the second-generation X55 model).

In fact, if manufacturers want to use the new Snapdragon 865, they’ll have to support 5G — Qualcomm tells *The Verge* that the 865 and X55 are a package deal, there’s no modem on board the 865 at all, and you can’t just make a 4G phone with the 865 by

using a different 4G modem.

Taken together, it’s a somewhat mixed bag for the still early days of the 5G rollout. With the 765 offering integrated 5G right out of the box, it means that we’ll start to finally see some midrange 5G phones (not just ultra high-end ones). On the other hand, it means that phone manufacturers like Samsung will still have to factor in a separate modem to add 5G to their best phones, with the additional space and power requirements that the extra chip requires. We will still have to wait for truly integrated 5G solutions.

As has become tradition for Qualcomm’s annual Snapdragon Tech Summit, the hard details on the two new processors won’t come until the keynote on December 4th, but the announcement of new Qualcomm processors is a big deal. Nearly every major Android phone uses Qualcomm’s 800-series processors, which means that whatever Qualcomm announces for the 865 will also be a preview of what to expect from 2020 phones like the Galaxy S11, OnePlus 8, Pixel 5, Galaxy Note 11, LG G9, and more.

We’ll have additional details on the Snapdragon 865 and 765 tomorrow as the Snapdragon Tech Summit continues, so check back for more information soon.

***Correction, 6:58PM ET**: Qualcomm has confirmed to The Verge that the Snapdragon 865 will be exclusive for 5G phones and will require the companion X55 modem. This article originally stated that manufacturers would be able to offer 4G-only devices using the Snapdragon 865. We regret the error.*

https://www.theverge.com/circuitbreaker/2019/12/3/20992308/qualcomm-snapdragon-865-flagship-5g-announcement-765-modem-tech-summit