

Apple expected to bow to EU and unveil iPhone with USB-C charger

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A USB-C charger (R) and a traditional Apple Lightning charger (L) are seen on an Apple iPhone.

Apple is expected to unveil its new iPhone lineup on Tuesday, with its Lightning charger ports likely to be replaced on the newest models by a universal charger after a tussle with the European Union.

The bloc is insisting that all phones and other small devices must be

compatible with the USB-C charging cables from the end of next year, a move it says will reduce waste and save money for consumers.

The firm had long argued that its cable was more secure than USB-C chargers, which are already deployed by Apple on other devices and widely used by rivals including the world's biggest smartphone maker Samsung.

Apple, still the world's biggest company by market capitalization, has not revealed what it plans to announce at Tuesday's "Wonderlust" event but usually unveils new iPhones at this time of year.

It comes as Apple faces declining sales of iPhones, with higher prices pushing customers to delay switching to newer models.

The firm is also caught up in diplomatic turbulence between the United States and China, with reports saying the Communist government is banning civil servants from using its phones.

'Tepid' sales

Like any other company, Apple would prefer to boast about shiny new features rather than new charging ports.



Apple iPhone sales lagged estimates in the recently ended quarter and unconfirmed reports have it that China is stopping government workers from using the handsets.

But analysts agree that the switch to USB-C is going to be the main headline.

Insider Intelligence principal analyst Yory Wurmser said the iPhone needed "a big cycle" after "tepid" recent sales.

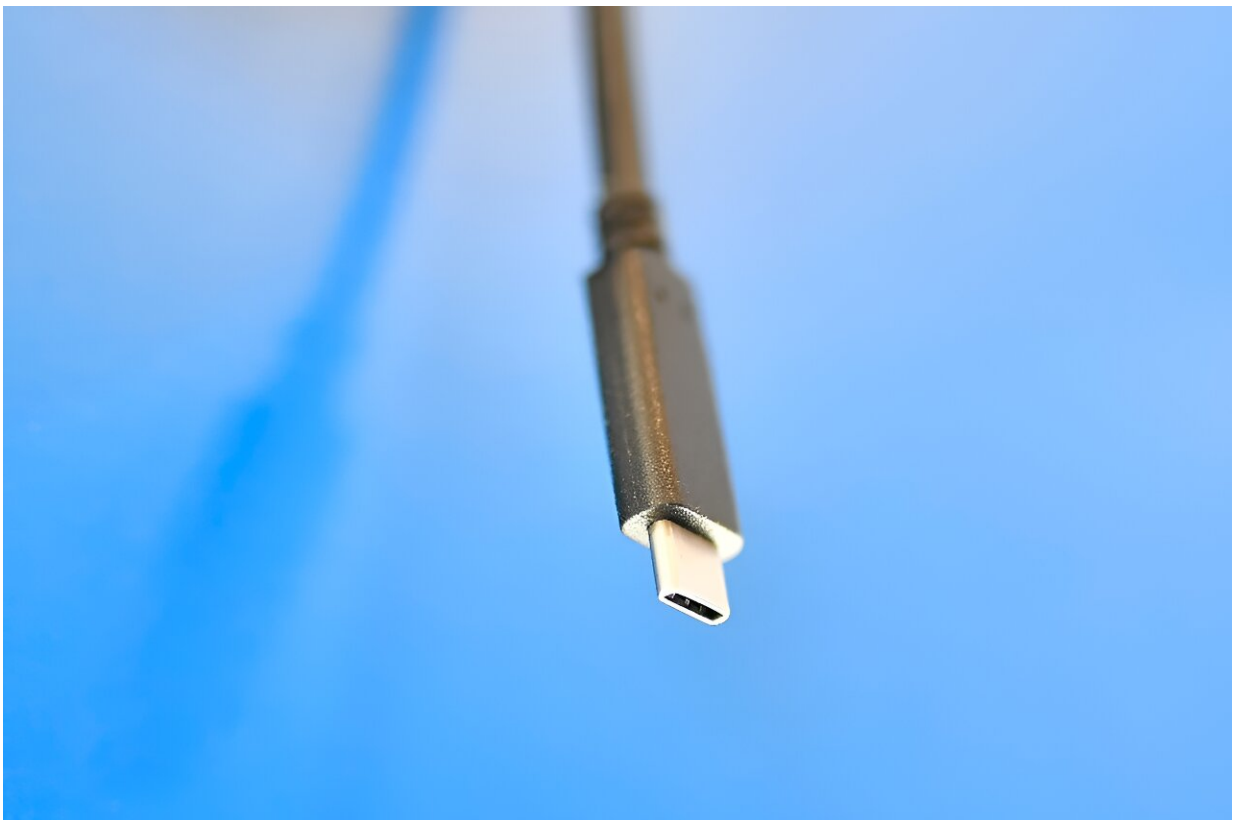
He said Tuesday's event would probably see new Apple Watch and AirPods models, "but it's the iPhone 15 that will really determine how the next year will look for Apple".

EU policymakers said the rule would simplify the lives of Europeans and do away with a mountain of obsolete chargers.

"With the common charger, we are slashing consumer costs, and it's good for the environment too," said EU internal market commissioner Thierry Breton in a statement, adding that the move would save consumers 250 million euros (\$270 million) each year.

Apple had long resisted the change, arguing that it would stifle innovation and make the phones less secure.

"The cable change may give consumers pause, but within a generation they will get over it: they won't have a choice," said Techsponential analyst Avi Greengart.



USB-C type connectors set to become mandatory in Europe are said to charge devices faster than the Lightning cables currently used for iPhones.

Price bump?

Along with rolling improvements to iPhone cameras and chips, Apple is expected to raise prices on its Pro models, according to Wurmser.

Sales of iPhones in the recently ended quarter lagged analyst estimates.

Apple suffered a 2.4 percent drop in iPhone sales, which account for nearly half of total revenues.

Apple shares were battered last week following reports of significant Chinese restrictions on iPhones at government offices and state-backed entities.

"China is a very important market for Apple, so any negative sentiment by the Chinese government toward Apple is concerning," analyst Greengart told AFP.

Apple reported \$15.8 billion in revenues from China in the most recent quarter, nearly 20 percent of total revenues. Executives pointed to the uptick in China sales in a period when overall sales fell.

Wedbush analyst Dan Ives estimated that a Chinese government ban would affect less than 500,000 iPhones of roughly 45 million projected to be sold in the country in the next year.

"We believe despite the loud noise Apple has seen massive share gains in

China smartphone market," Ives said.

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