Apple Sells Record 3 Million New iPads in Tablet’s Debut Weekend

By Adam Satariano - Mar 19, 2012

Apple Inc. (AAPL) said it sold more than 3 million iPads during the debut weekend for the latest model of the market-leading tablet computer.

The tally is a record for opening weekend iPad sales, Cupertino, California-based Apple said in a statement. AT&T Inc. (T) said earlier today that it had also set a single-day record for iPad sales when it was made available on March 16.

The iPad, first introduced in 2010, is Apple’s second-biggest source of revenue, behind the iPhone. The new version features a high-definition screen and a faster processor. Apple Chief Executive Officer Tim Cook has said he thinks purchases of tablet computers such as the iPad will eventually surpass those of personal computers.

Apple sold a record 15.4 million iPads in the fiscal first quarter, which ended Dec. 31. The new device initially went on sale in the U.S., Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Puerto Rico, Singapore, Switzerland, the U.K., U.S. Virgin Islands and Hong Kong. On March 23, it goes on sale in 24 additional countries.

The iPad sales figure is Apple’s second major announcement today. The world’s most valuable company said earlier it will use some of its $97.6 billion in cash and investments to institute a dividend and begin buying back $10 billion worth of shares.

Apple rose 2.7 percent to a record $601.10 at the close in New York. The shares have surged 48 percent this year.

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