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How just ONE mobile phone can make a plane crash, leaked study reveals

By [Daniel Bates](#)

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Using just one mobile phone or electronic device during a flight can cause a plane's systems to shut down, a leaked study has found.

A single Blackberry or iPad can cause the auto pilot to disengage and critical warning lights to come on, testers discovered.

The instruments which guide pilots in bad weather can also be affected by the electrical signals from such devices - with potentially catastrophic consequences.



Disruption: A businessman uses his mobile on a plane

A confidential study by the the International Air Transport Association, a trade group representing more 230 passenger and cargo airlines worldwide, found that over six years there were 75 separate incidents which caused concern.

A previous probe by the UK Civil Aviation Authority found just 35 safety alerts blamed on phones over the same time scale.

The IATA experts called for passengers to stop ignoring warnings about electronic devices because they could cause the plane to crash.

Confidential tests by Boeing have revealed that the worst offender for electronic interference was the iPad, followed by the iPhone and the Blackberry.

In tests just one of each device left on sent out hidden signals which were well above what Boeing considered safe to fly on.

WHY YOU CAN'T USE A MOBILE IN THE AIR

The ban was brought in because safety officials suspected that the radio frequency emitted by cell phones could malfunction a plane's electronic systems.

It was feared that early cellular phones could possibly bleed over into the communications between the plane, other planes and ground communications.

Newer digital phones do not have this problem, but the ban remains, it is assumed, to save the airlines from having to deal with phone conversations and others complaining.

Others claim that the airlines would simply prefer passengers use the telecommunications systems mounted on seat backs in commercial airplanes, because these phones are said to be highly profitable.

ABC News reported that of the 75 incidents, 26 affected the flight controls including the autopilot and landing gear whilst seventeen affected navigation systems.

Some 15 caused problems for communications systems and 13 produced electronic warnings, including some for the engine.

The study also included pilot testimony such as one chilling account which read: 'At about 4500 ft, the autopilot disengaged by itself and the associated warnings/indications came on.

‘Flight attendants were immediately advised to look out for PAX (passengers) operating electronic devices

‘Attendants reported that there were 4 PAX operated electronic devices (1 handphone and 3 iPods).’

The crew used the public address system to advise the passengers to shut off electronic devices ‘for their safety and the safety of the flight,’ after which the aircraft proceeded ‘without any further incident’.

Dave Carson of Boeing, who has served on a U.S. advisory group that looked into the problem, said phones and electronic gadgets could cause major problems for pilots.

‘It could be you that you were to the right of the runway when in fact, you were to the left of the runway, or just completely wipe out the signal so that you didn't get any indication of where you are coming in,’ he said.

Asked if a phone’s signal really can do that damage, he said: ‘It is when it goes in the right place at the right time.’

Engineers have previously warned that the growing obsession with mobile phones and other gadgets could create a 'perfect storm' of interference with aircraft instruments to cause a crash.

Phone interference was cited as a possible factor in a 2003 crash in New Zealand in which eight people died after the plane flew into the ground short of the runway.

The pilot had been calling home.

In 2007, the navigational equipment of a Boeing 737 in the U.S. failed after take off, only to reactivate after a passenger was told to turn off a sat-nav.

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