

# How to Tell the FCC: No Phone Calls on Planes

The moment has come for us all to speak up in defense of our sanity.

The FCC is now accepting public comments on its [potentially disastrous proposal](#) to allow people to scream at their cell phones on airplanes.

There are several lines of defense against this air rage-triggering nightmare, but it's worth trying to stop it at the FCC. In a 3-2 vote, the commissioners pushed off any responsibility for what airlines end up doing with their permission to activate cellular services on planes, saying that the airlines probably wouldn't allow voice calls if they make people nuts. The FCC is only here to make technical determinations, the commissioners said.

The Department of Transportation is also now looking at [creating its own ban](#) on in-flight phone calls, and [the flight attendants' union](#) has come out against voice calling, as well.

I don't think we should trust the airlines, which may decide that a few dollars in phone call roaming fees are worth flyers wanting to rip each others' tongues out with their bare hands. While I'm happy to see Delta, my usual carrier, come out against in-flight calls, it's a publicly listed company and hasn't yet suffered the stock market's inevitable complaints that it's leaving money on the table by taking that stand.

Submitting an objection to the FCC makes your objection public. It'll get picked up in the press. It'll help build a tidal swell of opposition to show that even if the FCC ignores public opinion on narrow technical grounds, someone else should step up to help weary flyers.

American flyers in coach cabins simply can't be trusted with voice calling. Our planes are notoriously cramped, and we're not exactly a quiet, retiring, or polite culture. Most flights nowadays survive only in brittle, easily shattered bubbles of personal space, rattled every time someone tries to recline a seat or go to the bathroom. And yet we must fly, to work or to see family. Let's not let civility slip further by allowing loud voice calls on planes.

To file a brief comment, [go here](#) and enter proceeding number 13-301. If you like cypypasta, here's what I recommend.

*I oppose the FCC allowing the use of cell phone voice calling on aircraft in flight, except in emergency situations. This isn't just an issue of comfort or courtesy, it's one of safety. In cramped airline cabins, passions already run high. Even when people try to talk quietly on mobile phones, they speak more loudly than they expect because of a lack of sidetone and overcompensation for background noise. Loud mobile phone conversations could dramatically increase the prevalence of "air rage," endangering the*

*lives of passengers and crew.*

*SMS texting and Internet connectivity are both excellent ways for fliers to stay entertained and in touch with their friends, family and work contacts on the ground. For safety's sake, the FCC should approve SMS and data use but prohibit voice calls except in emergencies.*

Want to see what other people have said? Check it out [in the FCC's filing system here](#).