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Public Comments on Expanding Access to Mobile Wireless Services Onboard Aircraft:=====

Title: Expanding Access to Mobile Wireless Services Onboard Aircraft

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Comment: Dear Sir or Madam: I am writing to encourage you to continue the ban on in-flight use of cell phones. The primary job of flight attendants is safety - and they can't maintain safety in an atmosphere of heightened noise and tension.

Allowing cell phone conversations on planes is inevitably another way to increase fees. Airlines will charge a steep fee for passengers to sit in a cell-phone free zone (even though there will be no such thing).

Here are the main reasons to ban cell phones on planes:

- Expanded cell phone use will compromise Flight Attendants' ability to maintain order in an emergency and to perform safety checks and demonstrations.
- While announcing safety-related information at various times during every flight, Flight Attendants may be forced to talk over passengers or ask them to tone it down.
- In an emergency, cabin preparations can be hindered by passengers attempting to use their phones rather than paying attention to vital, life-saving safety information.
- Recent videos from actual incidents that have been posted on YouTube demonstrate that cell phone usage distracts passengers during in-flight emergencies—adding voice conversations to the mix means passengers will most likely attempt to finish phone conversations while Flight Attendants are attempting to relay vital information.
- Recent research studies demonstrate that cell phone use interferes with cognitive functioning and that people, when using a cell phone, are less likely to offer assistance—either factor may jeopardize passenger safety and survival during an emergency.
- Expanded cell phone use will increase cabin noise and tension among passengers. That's why surveys have shown consistently that more than 3 in 5 U.S. airline passengers support prohibiting the use of cell phones while in flight.
- Passenger irritation will undoubtedly increase as a result of what researchers dub "halfalogues"—where the bystander only hears half the conversation, as is the case with cellphones—which are far more intrusive and annoying than dialogues.
- Flight Attendants may be placed in the uncomfortable position of asking "disruptive" passengers to end phone conversations, or in the clearly unacceptable position of having to monitor cabin conversations for "appropriateness."
- Passengers may be involuntarily subject to a known disturbance with no escape and no relief until the flight lands.
- Passengers' ability to sleep, read or work on a flight will be at risk.
- Expanded cell phone use will add unacceptable risk to aviation security—expanding communications technology options to persons other than airline crew and law enforcement personnel in the cabin is a bad idea given the ongoing threat of terrorism.
- The September 11 terrorists demonstrated their ability to mount a coordinated attack using U.S. commercial aviation, and normalizing the use of voice communications by all occupants in the airline cabin would have the unintended consequence of adding this capability as a tool in the terrorist's arsenal.

- Allowing direct, real-time communications between perpetrators may elevate the seriousness of a future attack, as it would allow a terrorist in the front of the cabin to easily notify co-conspirators when the cockpit door is vulnerable or when the flight attendants in a specific area of the cabin have been incapacitated, allow terrorists within an aircraft cabin the ability to communicate discreetly, or allow terrorist cells on multiple planes to coordinate and simultaneously commence attacks.

Thanks. Nancy Cooper

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