



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Aviation  
Administration**

# SAFO

Safety Alert for Operators

SAFO 09003  
DATE: 02/04/09

Flight Standards Service  
Washington, DC

[http://www.faa.gov/other\\_visit/aviation\\_industry/airline\\_operators/airline\\_safety/safo](http://www.faa.gov/other_visit/aviation_industry/airline_operators/airline_safety/safo)

---

*A SAFO contains important safety information and may include recommended action. SAFO content should be especially valuable to air carriers in meeting their statutory duty to provide service with the highest possible degree of safety in the public interest. Besides the specific action recommended in a SAFO, an alternative action may be as effective in addressing the safety issue named in the SAFO.*

**Subject:** Cellular Phone Usage on the Flight Deck

**Purpose:** This SAFO alerts all Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) part 121 and 135 certificate holders to the potential hazards associated with crewmembers leaving their cellular phones in the ON position during the critical phases of flight.

**Background:** While conducting an en route inspection of an air carrier, an aviation safety inspector (ASI) experienced an event that was categorized as a potentially serious hazard. During the takeoff phase, just prior to reaching V<sub>1</sub>, a rather loud “warbling” sound was detected by both crewmembers. It was later determined that the sound came from the First Officer’s cellular phone, which had been left in the ON position. As a result, the ring tone caused a distraction between the crewmembers during the takeoff phase and could have led the crew to initiate an unnecessary rejected takeoff.

During a debriefing, the crew stated that their General Operations Manual (GOM) did not address procedures prohibiting the crew from leaving their cellular phones in the ON position while at their duty stations. This was verified by the ASI.

An inspection of the air carrier’s checklists revealed that the checklists did not address crewmembers turning off their cellular phones in preparation for departure. The ASI expressed concern that this type of distraction while in the critical phase of flight may interfere with the proper conduct of the flight crewmember’s duties, contrary to 14 CFR part 135, § 135.100 and part 121, § 121.542. The FAA also details this policy in the current version of Advisory Circular 91-21, paragraph 7B which states in part, “*A cell phone will not be authorized for use while the aircraft is being taxied for departure after leaving the gate. The unit will be turned off and properly stowed to prepare the aircraft for takeoff as per the operator’s procedures.*”

**Recommended Action:** The Director of Operations of part 121 and part 135 certificate holders should perform a review of their respective GOM to determine if appropriate procedures are in place to remind crewmembers to turn off their cellular phones in preparation for departure. Jumpseat checklists should also be reviewed to ensure checklist items remind personnel occupying a jumpseat to turn off their cellular phone while on the flight deck. Additionally, the operator-specific indoctrination training curriculum segments and recurrent training curriculums in the certificate holder’s approved training program should be reviewed and evaluated relative to the sterile cockpit concept.