



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN TOM WHEELER ON FCC IN-FLIGHT MOBILE WIRELESS SERVICES PROPOSAL

Washington, D.C. – Federal Communications Commission Chairman Tom Wheeler has issued the following statement:

“Yesterday we announced a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) proposal that recognizes that there is no technical reason to prohibit mobile devices from interfacing with the onboard wireless data systems being installed on many aircraft. If the Commission adopts this proposal after the public has had the opportunity to comment it will be only a technical advisory, an update to our rules. There is nothing in the proposal that prohibits airlines from developing whatever in-flight phone usage policy they may wish.

“The job of the FCC with respect to this issue is limited to issues related to communications technology. Technology is available and being deployed today on flights outside the United States that permits use of mobile devices on planes without causing interference to cell phone networks on the ground. These advances in technology likely no longer warrant – on a technological basis – the prohibition of in-flight phone use with the appropriate on-board equipment.

“We understand that many passengers would prefer that voice calls not be made on airplanes. I feel that way myself. Ultimately, if the FCC adopts the proposal in the coming months, it will be airlines’ decisions, in consultation with their customers, as to whether to permit voice calls while airborne. The European Union has had a similar policy since 2008. That experience has demonstrated that it is possible to adjust the on-board communications equipment not to handle voice traffic, thus effectively shutting down any calls.

“We believe that airlines are best positioned to make such decisions. For this reason, our proposal does not impose any requirement that airlines should provide voice connectivity. We encourage airlines, pilots, flight attendants, and the public to engage in our upcoming rulemaking process.”

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