

October 25, 2014

TO: US DOT Advisory Committee for Aviation Consumer Protection

FROM: Paul Hudson, President, Flyersrights.org
Member, FAA Aviation Rulemaking Advisory Committee (1993-present)
Former Member, FAA/TSA Aviation Security Advisory Committee (1997-2007)

RE: Cell phone use on airliners

Flyersrights.org, the largest nonprofit airline passenger organization with over 45,000 members, strongly opposes the use of cell phones for voice communications on airliners.

There is no doubt that airline passengers as well as flight crew members overwhelmingly oppose allowing passengers to have cell phone conversations in the passenger cabin. The principal concern is invasion of privacy and annoyance by being forced to listen to often loud phone conversations of other passengers, but also includes concerns for security and safety.

The FCC Notice of Proposed of Proposed Rulemaking that would allow airlines to decide this issue closed in May 2014 and received over 1,400 public comments, of which 98% were in opposition. See FCC Docket 13-301.

Most of the commentators were long time travelers who have personally experienced the annoyance of cell phone conversations in other confined venues such as in trains, buses or in theatres, which generally ban or severely restrict the use of cell phones.

Air rage would be likely to increase, as shown by the assaults and even homicides caused by cell phone use in theatres, even where prohibited. For example see www.cnn.com/2014/02/07/justice/florida-movie-theatre-shooting/

There is also a possibility that terrorists could use cell phones to coordinate attacks, interfere with pilot and crew communications or trigger bombs on airliners.

Passengers are already permitted to have access to internet email using laptops and tablet computers and could be allowed access to text messaging and email on smart phones. There is no reason to extend this to cell phone voice conversations. This would inevitably be disturbing to other passengers and probably interfere with flight crew safety instructions and communications. The only possible exception should be if an airline provides a privacy booth for cell phone call conversations that prevents any disturbance to other passengers.

Accordingly, the DOT and FAA regardless of FCC action should ban voice cell phone calls on airliners.

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