

SACAA CLARIFIES MATTERS ON CELL PHONE USAGE IN FLIGHT

The South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) wishes to clarify certain aspects regarding the use of cell phones on aircraft.

What does the regulation state?

Civil Aviation Regulation 91.01.9 (1) together with Aeronautical Information Circular (AIC) notice number 64-12, prohibit the use of certain electronic devices, including cellular phones in flight. To date this is still the case.

Clarity on the SAA exemption and its implications

The SACAA acknowledges that technology advances rapidly. It came as no surprise when airlines started showing an interest in testing the feasibility of using cell phones on board. However, the SACAA wishes to clarify that despite reports from some media outlets, South African Airways (SAA) to date is the only operator / airline that officially applied and received the requisite exemption to test this possibility. The six-month exemption was granted to SAA in January of this year.

One of the conditions of the exemption was that SAA would submit a detailed proposal as to how they would monitor the usage of cell phones in flight. In addition, the SACAA would conduct its own monitoring.

The testing phase commenced on 15 April 2011. The initial testing phase is for six months and depending on the results of these tests, the SACAA may conclude the testing phase or may request further tests.

How is the exemption and testing being implemented, i.e. what does this mean for passengers?

Testing is on certain domestic routes, for each aircraft type in the SAA fleet and at certain specified times of the day. There will be onboard announcements advising passengers that testing will be conducted and guidelines on what the tests will entail.

What is the status with regard to other airlines?

No other airline has officially approached the SACAA for a similar exemption, hence this testing process is limited to SAA only at this stage, as is the monitoring conducted by the SACAA.

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About the SACAA:

The South African Civil Aviation Authority ("SACAA") is a juristic body established in terms of the Civil Aviation Act, 2009 (Act No. 13 of 2009) ("the Act"). SACAA is governed and controlled by the Civil Aviation Authority Board ("the Board"). In terms of mandate, the SACAA is tasked with promoting and maintaining a safe, secure and sustainable civil aviation environment, by regulating and overseeing the functioning and development of the industry in an efficient, cost-effective, and customer-friendly manner according to international standards.

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