

Motorola Unveils Rugged Windows Mobile Phone

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Motorola MC35 Rugged Windows Mobile Phone

Motorola announced a new rugged Windows Mobile handheld for businesses, the MC35, at the CTIA Wireless trade show Tuesday.

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The MC35 isn't the sexiest PDA/phone, but it will make IT

administrators swoon with joy. It's an affordable model from the former Symbol, the maker of industrial handhelds that was absorbed by Motorola earlier this year.

The PDA/phone survives drop and tumble tests and can be managed remotely from a company's home office with other Symbol handhelds. Motorola says they'll support it for at least five years, with customers able to buy service contracts in three-year blocks.

"You break it, we'll fix it," said Sheldon Safir, director of product marketing for Motorola's Enterprise Mobile Computing (EMC) group.

The gadget is targeted at field sales workers, Safir says. It runs Windows Mobile 5.0 on a Marvell (formerly Intel) 416-MHz PXA 270 processor. It makes calls over a quad-band GSM phone with EDGE, and also connects to 802.11 b/g networks. Voice-over-IP calling is certainly possible, but the MC35 doesn't come with any software built in for VOIP. Workers can also use Bluetooth headsets and print to Bluetooth printers.

The MC35 also has a two-megapixel camera that doubles, with the flick of a hardware switch, as a bar code reader. It isn't as fast as the dedicated scanners on other Symbol products, but it's fine for light-duty use, Safir said. The MC50 has a 2.8-inch, 320x240 touch screen, a full keyboard with unusually well-separated keys, and 64 Mbytes of RAM. The unit's GPS functions (supporting Telenav navigation software, along with other field-force automation packages) are useful both for workers and for bosses, the company said.

The best thing about the MC35 for medium-sized businesses is the list price: between \$640 to \$765. That makes handhelds from the former Symbol finally price-competitive with competitors like HP. It's also smaller than other Symbol handhelds; "about the size of a Treo" at 5

inches x 2.59-in. x .81 in., according to Safir.

Since Motorola is assuming businesses will keep these for at least two years, they'll probably offer an upgrade path to Windows Mobile 6, though they don't have firm plans yet, Safir said.

The MC35 will ship in the second quarter of this year, both unlocked through traditional Symbol sales channels and branded through Cingular.

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