

# Apple in hot water in France over 'exploding iPhones'

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The Apple iPhone seen here in June 2009. Half a dozen new cases of "exploding iPhones" emerged in France on Wednesday, as Apple faced an official inquiry and calls to come clean over possible risks linked to its wildly popular smartphone.

Half a dozen new cases of "exploding iPhones" emerged in France on Wednesday, as Apple faced an official inquiry and calls to come clean over possible risks linked to its wildly popular smartphone.

An 80-year-old pensioner from the Paris suburbs said Wednesday his [iPhone](#) screen cracked up in his hands, a day after a supermarket watchman claimed he was hurt in the eye when his screen suddenly shattered this week.

Eight French consumers have now come forward saying their iPhone

screens exploded or cracked without explanation, according to an AFP tally, including a first case in mid-August in which a teenager suffered an eye injury.

Apple is accused of trying to hush up 15 cases of iPod music players heating up and bursting into flames in the United States and in one similar British case, all apparently due to overheated lithium ion batteries.

None of the incidents has caused a serious injury but Apple was forced to defend the safety of its flagship smartphone before the European Union this month, insisting the exploding screen cases were "isolated incidents."

The US technology giant, which has sold 26 million iPhones and 200 million [iPods](#) to date, said it been informed of the French cases, but would not comment until it had examined the damaged phones.

"We are aware of these reports and we are waiting to receive the iPhones from the customers. Until we have the full details, we don't have anything further to add," Alan Hely, head of communications at Apple Europe, told AFP.

But France's official competition, consumer affairs and fraud watchdog, the DGCCRF, has launched an investigation to find out whether the Apple smartphone could pose a threat to consumers.

"An investigation is under way. We have been alerted to the problem and we are looking into it closely," a spokesman said Tuesday.

France's consumer rights group, UFC-Que Choisir, also called on Apple to come clean about possible faults with its iPod and iPhone devices.

"We want to know if this is an isolated incident as they claim, or a real problem involving the iPhone -- in which case, what are they planning by way of compensation and to prevent it happening again?" said a spokesman.

In the British case Apple came under fire for allegedly asking the young girl's family to sign a confidentiality agreement -- slammed as a "gagging order" -- before it would agree to refund her.

In the latest French incident, Rolland Caufman, a pensioner from the Paris suburb of Noisy-le-Sec, says his iPhone screen broke up on July 21, the week after he bought it.

"I went out shopping, with my iPhone in my left pocket, when I suddenly felt it heat up and start vibrating -- even though I never use the vibrate setting.

"I took it out of my pocket and held it to my ear -- and saw the screen crack up like a car windscreen," he told AFP.

Caufman says Apple initially refused to believe him, before finally sending him a free replacement.

On Tuesday, 26-year-old security guard Yassine Bouhadi, claimed he was hit in the eye with a glass shard when the screen of his iPhone cracked up. He said he would seek a full refund and file suit for damages.

French mobile phone operator Orange said it had been contacted by two customers with shattered iPhone screens, out of 1.2 million iPhones sold.

The European Commission has asked all 27 EU nations to keep it informed of any problems, under the community's rapid alert system for

dangerous consumer products, known as RAPEX.

Commission spokeswoman Helen Kearns said "[Apple](#) has been very cooperative," stressing that RAPEX alerts were issued every week -- sometimes leading to mass product recalls, but at other times with no consequence.

"We're not there yet. We just need to monitor closely now and see if these are isolated incidents," she told AFP.

"We'll be vigilant and if necessary we'll take further actions. But we need to examine the situation better."

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