

US panel says some gadgets should be allowed in flight

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A uses a laptop during a flight from Guatemala to Mexico on April 28, 2009

An advisory panel to the US Federal Aviation Administration has urged regulators to allow some personal electronics to be used throughout flight, a move hailed by consumer groups Tuesday.

The recommendations would allow devices for reading, playing games or watching videos to be operated on an airplane at any altitude, according

to US media reports.

According to current regulations, personal devices like smartphones and other computers must be powered down during takeoff and landing.

The panel said a ban should remain on browsing the Internet and sending or receiving texts and emails while the plane is flying below 10,000 feet. Those activities could be allowed again once the WiFi in the plane was activated.

The panel did not consider whether cell phone calls should be allowed in flight. Those are banned by a separate government agency, the Federal Communications Commission.

The panel's advice was delivered on Monday and is being considered by the FAA. If approved, it may be implemented as early as next year.

Support for the move to allow wider use of [personal electronic devices](#) (PED) came from the Consumer Electronic Association.

"There has been widespread passenger use of PEDs aboard airplanes for several years with no significant interference incidents during tens of millions of flights," the group said in a statement.

The 28-member [advisory panel](#) was convened by the FAA last year to consider the latest technologies and whether some consumer devices should be allowed during flight.

The final decision is up to FAA administrator Michael Huerta. The FAA spokesman was not reachable for comment Tuesday due to the US government shutdown, prompted by a battle among lawmakers over health care reform.

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