

Apple sorry for software glitch, defends new iPhones (Update 2)

September 25 2014, by Rob Lever



Apple sold more than 10 million of the iPhone 6 in the first three days after its launch

Apple made a rare apology Thursday for a software bug that has seen iPhone users lose service, while seeking to quell a storm over reports that its new handsets are susceptible to bending.

The slew of negative headlines saw a steep drop in Apple stock, as the

US tech giant acknowledged the software glitch, offering a temporary fix immediately and a full update "in the next few days."

But Apple sought to minimize reports on bending of its newly released oversize iPhone—one analyst described the damaging claims as "a black eye" for Apple — saying it had only received nine complaints about the matter.

"Our iPhones are designed, engineered and manufactured to be both beautiful and sturdy," a spokeswoman said in an email to AFP.

"They also feature stainless steel and titanium inserts to reinforce high-stress locations and use the strongest glass in the smartphone industry."

The statement said that "with normal use a bend in iPhone is extremely rare and through our first six days of sale, a total of nine customers have contacted Apple with a bent iPhone 6 Plus."

Apple has offered a "workaround" to the software glitch after numerous users complained on social media and online forums that the iOS 8.0.1 update left their phones largely inoperable.

The update, which was released and then pulled within hours Wednesday, had been developed to add in fitness monitoring programs which were omitted from the iOS 8 platform released last week.

"We have a workaround for you if you have an iPhone 6 or iPhone 6 Plus and you lost cellular service and Touch ID functionality today after updating to iOS 8.0.1," Apple said.

The temporary fix allows users to reinstall iOS 8 through iTunes until the full update becomes available.

In a separate statement emailed to AFP, Apple said, "We apologize for the great inconvenience experienced by users and are working around the clock to prepare iOS 8.0.2 with a fix for the issue."



Members of the media gather outside the Apple store in Pasadena, California on September 19, 2014

#BendGate

It is further embarrassment to Apple after some users posted comments about bends in the bodies of the oversize iPhone 6 Plus when carried in trouser pockets.

On the MacRumors forum of Apple users, one iPhone buyer noted that, after carrying the handset in a front pocket for 18 hours, "I saw the reflection of the window in the iPhones slightly distorted."

The user posted a picture of the bent iPhone, and dozens posted similar complaints on Twitter, using the hashtag #BendGate.

Apple shares tumbled 3.8 percent to \$97.88 on the news, amid concerns the problems could hurt sales of the hugely profitable iPhones.

"It's certainly a black eye for Apple," said Roger Kay, analyst at Endpoint Technologies Associates.

Kay said the software glitch "is not a major problem, they can fix that" in a short period of time.

More serious, said Kay, is the whether Apple's new "phablet" will be viewed as too fragile for some buyers.

"The bending problem is baked into the design of the phone so its something they can't just fix," Kay told AFP. "They're committed to this design."

The analyst said Apple may offer some compensation to buyers or it may take a "hardball" approach by saying, "you're not supposed to abuse your phone or sit on your phone, you're supposed to treat it like a piece of electronics."

'Let's get real'

Brian White, analyst at the brokerage Cantor Fitzgerald, said the problems were blown out of proportion and that the share drop offered a good buying opportunity for Apple stocks.

"Let's get real," White said in a note to clients, calling the concerns about bending "irrational."

"After taking both new iPhones for a spin at Apple's special event, and again this week in Hong Kong, concerns with bending the iPhones never crossed our mind as both felt very durable," he said.

"As such, we believe this concern offers investors an opportunity to take advantage of this media-hyped situation and participate in what we believe is the next 'super cycle' for Apple."

Apple said Monday it sold more than 10 million of the new smartphones in the first three days since launching in a handful of countries, setting a new record for opening weekend sales.

The iPhone 6 and iPhone 6 Plus were launched Friday in the United States, Britain, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, Puerto Rico and Singapore.

They will be available in more than 20 additional countries on September 26, and 115 countries by the end of the year.

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Citation: Apple sorry for software glitch, defends new iPhones (Update 2) (2014, September 25) retrieved 3 May 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2014-09-apple-acknowledges-bug-iphone-software.html>

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