

Qantas, Virgin Australia ground Samsung Note 7 after recall

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A woman tests a Samsung Galaxy Note7 smartphone at a Samsung showroom in Seoul on September 2, 2016

Australian carriers Qantas and Virgin Australia told customers on Thursday not to use or charge Samsung's Galaxy Note 7 during flights after faulty batteries in the new smartphone caused some handsets to explode.

Samsung, the world's largest smartphone maker, said last week it was suspending sales of its latest flagship mobile device and recalling 2.5 million units shipped globally following reports of exploding "phablets" that dealt a heavy blow to the firm's reputation.

"Following Samsung Australia's recall of the Samsung Galaxy Note 7 Personal Electronic Device (PED), we are requesting that passengers who own them do not switch on or charge them inflight," a Qantas spokesman said in a statement.

The request applies to domestic and international flights as well as Qantas' discount carrier Jetstar, the spokesman added.

Qantas' domestic competitor Virgin Australia issued a similar statement, adding that it was making on-board announcements ahead of departures.

In 2014, Qantas and Virgin Australia allowed passengers to use mobile electronic devices in-flight with limited restrictions after a relaxation of the rules by the country's aviation authority.

Previous regulations banned their use during taxiing, take-off and landing due to fears they could interfere with the plane's navigation equipment.

Samsung's recall—the first for one of the South Korean electronics giant's top of the range phones—came a week before arch-rival Apple unveiled its iPhone 7 on Wednesday.

Samsung's mobile business chief Koh Dong-Jin had said the faulty rate amounted to 24 handsets per each million sold and that it would take about two weeks to prepare replacements.

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