

US regulators: Official recall of 1M Samsung Note 7 phones

September 15 2016, by Brandon Bailey And Mae Anderson



In this Thursday, Aug. 11, 2016, file photo, models hold Samsung Galaxy Note 7 smartphones during a launch event at the company's headquarters in Seoul, South Korea. U.S. regulators issued an official recall of Samsung's Galaxy Note 7

phone on Thursday, Sept. 15, 2016, because of a risk of fire. (AP Photo/Ahn Young-joon, File)

U.S. safety regulators announced a formal recall of Samsung's Galaxy Note 7 smartphone Thursday after a spate of fires led to injuries and property damage and created a global marketing headache.

Samsung had already initiated a voluntary recall, but the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission stepped in to coordinate. Commission Chairman Elliot Kaye blasted Samsung for trying to do the recall on its own, saying that anyone who believes that a unilateral effort would be sufficient "needs to have more than their phone checked."

Samsung sold about 2.5 million of its top-line smartphone, including about 1 million in the United States. Kaye said the South Korean company has now agreed to offer consumers the choice of a full refund or a replacement device. Before, Samsung was offering replacements only.

The recall comes as Samsung is locked in a fierce battle with Apple for the attentions of high-end smartphone purchasers. Apple just introduced the latest versions of its iPhone, which go on sale Friday. Samsung had beaten Apple to market with the Note 7 by several weeks, and it was drawing favorable reviews before consumers began reporting problems with the battery overheating, resulting in fires and explosions.

One family in St. Petersburg, Florida, reported that a Galaxy Note 7 left charging in their Jeep had caught fire, destroying the vehicle.

"Samsung has received 92 reports of the batteries overheating in the U.S., including 26 reports of burns and 55 reports of property damage,"

said a statement on the U.S. commission's website. The statement said property damage included fires in cars and a garage.

Samsung pledged Thursday to expedite the recall. "Consumer safety is always our highest priority," Tim Baxter, president of Samsung Electronics America, said in a statement.

The company has been criticized for its response over the past two weeks. Samsung announced on Sept. 2 that it had stopped selling the phone and would replace any that had been sold. But Samsung didn't tell consumers at the time to stop using the device. The company also did not immediately coordinate its recall with the U.S. consumer safety agency.

Since then, the Consumer Product Safety Commission has not only stepped in, but U.S. aviation safety officials have also taken the unusual step of warning airline passengers not to turn on or charge the phone during flights, or put them in checked bags.



In this July 28, 2016, file photo, the Galaxy Note 7, foreground, is displayed in New York. U.S. regulators issued an official recall of Samsung's Galaxy Note 7 phone on Thursday, Sept. 15, 2016, because of a risk of fire. (AP Photo/Richard Drew, File)

Gartner analyst Tuong Nguyen said Samsung's statements left many customers confused.

"Because it took a while, the messages were confusing, and that might have an impact on overall consumer confidence, especially since we're talking about a high-end device, their flagship phone," Nguyen said.

People who bought the phone did so to get the best possible quality and service, he said, and how the recall came about "kind of seems like a strike on both counts."

Samsung said Note 7 purchasers will be offered the choice of a refund or a replacement. For a replacement, customers can choose a new Note 7 when it is available again in the U.S. by Wednesday, or the smaller and cheaper Galaxy S7 or S7 Edge right away—with a refund of the price difference.

Speaking with reporters on Thursday, Kaye at the consumer safety commission said Note 7 purchasers should check the back of their device for an identifying number, and visit Samsung's recall website or call a hotline at 1-844-365-6197 to find out if the device needs to be turned in. If so, consumers can take the device back to Samsung or to the phone carrier that sold it. About 97 percent of phones sold in the U.S. are being recalled.

"We want the recall to be simple and straightforward," Kaye said. Speaking of consumers, he added, "We really do want them to take advantage of it right away. As we've seen from videos ... the phones really do present a serious fire hazard."

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Online:

Samsung recall site: samsung.com/us/note7recall

U.S. regulators: [www.cpsc.gov/en/Recalls/2016/S ... xy-Note7-Smartphones](http://www.cpsc.gov/en/Recalls/2016/S...xy-Note7-Smartphones)

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