

Samsung recalls Galaxy Note 7 after battery explosions

September 2 2016, by Youkyung Lee



Koh Dong-jin, president of Samsung Electronics' mobile business, speaks at a news conference in Seoul, South Korea, Friday, Sept. 2, 2016. Samsung suspended sales of its Galaxy Note 7 smartphone on Friday, just two weeks after the flagship phone's launch, after finding batteries of some of the gadgets exploded while they were charging. Koh said customers who already bought Note 7s will be able to swap them for new smartphones, regardless of when they purchased them. (Kim Hong-Ji/Pool Photo via AP)

Samsung recalled its Galaxy Note 7 smartphones on Friday after finding some of their batteries exploded or caught fire.

Samsung's Note 7s are being pulled from shelves in 10 countries, including South Korea and the United States, just two weeks after the product's launch. Customers who already bought Note 7s will be able to swap them for new smartphones in about two weeks, said Koh Dong-jin, president of Samsung's mobile business.

He apologized for causing inconvenience and concern to customers.

The recall, the first for the new smartphone though not the first for a battery, comes at a crucial moment in Samsung's mobile business. Apple is expected to announce its new iPhone next week and Samsung's mobile division was counting on momentum from the Note 7's strong reviews and higher-than-expected demand.

Samsung said it had confirmed 35 instances of Note 7s catching fire or exploding. There have been no reports of injuries related to the problem.

The company said it has not found a way to tell exactly which phones may endanger users out of the 2.5 million Note 7s already sold globally. It estimated that about 1 in 42,000 units may have a faulty battery.



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Samsung didn't say whether customers should stop using their phones, or whether explosions and fires could happen when the phone wasn't charging. Consumers who complained publicly said the problem came while the phone was being charged.

"The ball is in Samsung's court to make this right. Consumers want information about what's going on and peace of mind that this is not going to happen again," said Ramon Llamas, who tracks mobile devices

at research firm IDC. "No one wants to wake up at 1, 2 or 3 (in the morning) and find out your smartphone's on fire."

He added that while phone combustions are unusual, "35 instances are 35 too many."

This summer, Samsung ran into a quality-control issue with another smartphone, a niche model called the Galaxy S7 Active. Consumer Reports found that the phone didn't live up to its water-resistance promises. Samsung said that relatively few phones were affected and that it had identified and fixed the manufacturing problem. Samsung said it would replace devices under warranty if it failed, but it declined to let customers swap phones otherwise or to issue a broader recall.



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On the Note 7, after complaints surfaced online, Samsung found that a battery cell made by one of its two battery suppliers caused the phone to catch fire. Koh refused to name the supplier.

"There was a tiny problem in the manufacturing process, so it was very difficult to figure out," Koh told reporters at a news conference. "It will cost us so much it makes my heart ache. Nevertheless, the reason we made this decision is because what is most important is customer safety."

The phones start at \$850 in the U.S., more expensive than most phones. In the U.S., Samsung said it will let customers downgrade to a Galaxy S7 and refund the price difference. Or customers can get a replacement Note 7 as early as next week.

Customers' reports of scorched phones prompted Samsung to conduct extra quality controlling tests and delay shipments of the Note 7s this week before the recall.



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South Korean high school teacher Park Soo-Jung said she had rushed to buy the new phone, pre-ordering and then activating it on Aug. 19, its official launch date.

The 34-year-old living in the port city of Busan said that she was bruised when she rushed out of bed after her phone burst into flames, filling her bedroom with smoke stinking of chemicals.

She's having second thoughts about buying another newly released device, especially after losing all her personal data stored in the destroyed Note 7, she said.

"If the exploded phone had burned near my head, I would not have been able to write this post," she said in a popular online forum Thursday, where she shared a photo of the scorched Note 7 and described dousing the flames.



A customer holds a Samsung Electronics Galaxy Note 7 smartphone at the headquarters of South Korean mobile carrier KT in Seoul, South Korea, Friday, Sept. 2, 2016. Samsung will issue a global recall of the Galaxy Note 7 smartphone as soon as this weekend after its investigation on explosion claims found batteries were at fault, according to South Korea's Yonhap News. (AP Photo/ahn Young-joon)

China is not affected by the sales suspension. The company said it used a

battery made by another supplier for the Note 7s sold in China.



A Samsung Electronics Galaxy Note 7 smartphone is displayed at the headquarters of South Korean mobile carrier KT in Seoul, South Korea, Friday, Sept. 2, 2016. Samsung will issue a global recall of the Galaxy Note 7 smartphone as soon as this weekend after its investigation on explosion claims found batteries were at fault, according to South Korea's Yonhap News. (AP Photo/Ahn Young-joon)

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