

French Regulators Ban Sales of iPhone Model Over Radiation Concerns

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Regulators in France on Sept. 12 ordered tech giant Apple to pause sales of one of its iPhones in the country amid concerns it emits too much electromagnetic radiation.

France's National Frequency Agency (ANFR) notified Apple of its decision to ban sales of the iPhone 12 after conducting tests that showed that the smartphone's specific absorption rate (SAR) was slightly above the legal limit, Minister for Digital Transition and Telecommunications Jean-Noel Barrot told Le Parisien.

That means the iPhones, which have been sold by Apple since 2020, were emitting more electromagnetic waves susceptible to be absorbed by the body than legally permitted.

In a [press release](#), the regulator said 141 cellphones were recently tested by an accredited laboratory, allowing them to ensure the SAR values comply with European regulations.

However, regulators found absorption of electromagnetic energy by the body at 5.74 watts per kilogram during tests in which the device was held in the hand or placed in the trouser pocket.

The EU standard for SAR is 4.0 watts per kilogram.

SAR values were found to be compliant for iPhone 12 devices being carried at a distance of 5 mm from the body, like in coat pockets or bags, regulators said.

Software Update May Help

As a result, ANFR is asking Apple to immediately remove the device from shelves in the French market.

“Consequently, Apple must immediately adopt all necessary measures to prevent the iPhone 12 in the supply chain from being made available on the market,” ANFR said. “As for those telephones that are already in use, Apple must adopt all necessary corrective measures to bring the telephones into conformity as soon as possible, otherwise, Apple will have to recall the equipment.”

“The ANFR expects Apple to deploy all available means to put an end to the non-compliance,” regulators continued. “Failure to act will result in the recall of equipment that has already been made available to consumers. If Apple chooses to update its telephones, it shall be verified by the ANFR.

“Instruction has been given to the ANFR’s sworn officers to check that the iPhone 12 is no longer offered for sale in all distribution channels in France, from Tuesday 12 September 2023,” regulators concluded.

Apple did not immediately reply to a Reuters request for comment.

Mr. Barrot told Le Parisien that a software update would likely be sufficient to fix the radiation issues linked to the phone.

France ‘Prepared to Order Recall’

He noted that regulators anticipate Apple will respond to the findings within two weeks and that failure to do so could result in more drastic actions.

“If they fail to do so, I am prepared to order a recall of all iPhones 12 in circulation. The rule is the same for everyone, including the digital giants,” he said.

According to the European Parliamentary Research Service, scientists and researchers are divided in their opinions regarding the risks of cancer and the causality of cellphone use.

The electromagnetic fields produced by cellphones are classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer as “possibly carcinogenic” to humans.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO) states that a large number of studies were performed over the past two decades to assess whether cellphones pose a potential health risk and have so far established no adverse health effects caused by cellphone use.

“In addition to using ‘hands-free’ devices, which keep mobile phones away from the head and body during phone calls, exposure is also reduced by limiting the number and length of calls,” the WHO website states. “Using the phone in areas of good reception also decreases exposure as it allows the phone to transmit at reduced power. The use of commercial devices for reducing radiofrequency field exposure has not been shown to be effective.”

The ban on 12 series iPhone sales in France came on the same day that Apple unveiled its new iPhone 15 Pro and iPhone 15 Pro Max devices featuring a string of new features, including a USB-C port as opposed to the standard Lightning port.

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Reuters contributed to this report.

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