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Electronic Devices: Use on Airplanes (8/93)

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TOPIC -----

I've heard that using a PowerBook on an airplane disrupts radio frequencies. Is that true?

DISCUSSION -----

A number of pilots have reported that passenger use of portable electronic devices in some cases may have interfered with the aircraft's flight navigation or communications systems. In response, many airlines are restricting or managing the use of electronic equipment during flights.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) recently recommended that its member airlines prohibit passengers from using electronic devices during takeoffs and landings.

It's probably best to check with your airline to find out specific rules for your flights.

Some of the pilot-reported incidents of interference have involved PowerBook computers, but it is unclear whether those computers indeed disrupted airplane communication or, if they did, how. Apple is aiding an investigation into these incidents to prevent them in the future.

Based on what is known now about the effects of electronics on airplane communications, the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the International Special Committee on Radio Interference have established very strict regulations for radio frequency emissions from personal computers. All Apple products are designed to conform to these standards.

The in-flight use of cellular phones, radios, and other devices with antennas that transmit or receive radio signals have been long prohibited because they could interfere with ground communications. But the effects of passive electromagnetic emissions from equipment such as laptop computers are not clear.

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