

ESSENTIAL BACK-TO-WORK MOBILE PHONE HYGIENE

GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYERS

A guide compiled by Dr. Simon Clarke, Professor in Cellular Microbiology at the University of Reading, in association with Bullitt Group, licensee for Cat® phones.

Mobile phones have the potential to both harbour and spread Covid-19 if they are not thoroughly cleaned on a regular basis.

Constantly being exposed to other people, as well as shared surfaces, is a major risk factor for phone contamination. To reduce these risks, there needs to be a complete rethink around how personal and shared phones are used by employees to establish new potentially life-saving routines.



KEY GUIDANCE FOR ALL WORKERS

- Avoid using phones on public transport while commuting - this is an ingrained habit, but a possible major source for contamination and spread
- Avoid putting your phone down in any public space - shared counters, tables, seating and pull-down trays on public transport are hotspots
- Minimise personal phone use in the workplace - is what you're about to use your phone for really necessary?
- Clean your phone and wash your hands before leaving for work and as soon as arriving - think of your phone as an extension of you - if your hands are dirty, so is your phone
- Always clean your phone **before** washing your hands
Note: Ensure how the phone is cleaned is in line with manufacturers' guidelines so you don't risk damaging the phone and/or invalidating your warranty. Phones that can be cleaned more thoroughly could play a crucial role in reducing the spread of Covid-19. Cat® phones, unlike other phones, are rugged and can be hygienically scrubbed all over with hot soapy water or with disinfectant
- If you have to make a call, but are concerned your phone may have been contaminated, use your speaker phone function - this avoids putting the phone to your face before you've had an opportunity to clean it

WORKING OUTSIDE

There can be a false sense of security when working outside, as it's recognised as less risky for contracting the virus causing Covid-19. However, employees should keep their interactions with people and surfaces top-of-mind:

- Delivery drivers should keep their phones inside their vehicles, or in their pockets, wherever possible and never place them down anywhere during deliveries
- Surfaces like door knockers and doorbells are a potential source for contamination, so clean your hands thoroughly with sanitising gel before touching your phone again
- Be aware of how frequently you are around other people, which surfaces you touch and how likely they are to have been touched by others
- Building sites should be treated as public spaces with the same associated risk - many different teams of workers go through them and can potentially contaminate surfaces
- Keep personal phone use to a minimum and ensure they are cleaned (before your hands) before using them

WORKING IN OTHER PEOPLE'S HOMES

The type of work within other people's home varies hugely, with some jobs posing very little risk depending on how much contact they have with other people while other professions, for example plumbers, as they're often exposed to potential contamination when unblocking drains) are more at risk:

- Keep your phone in your pocket/bag and avoid placing it on surfaces in other people's homes
- Where possible, completely avoid using your personal phone while in another person's home
- If you have to make a call while in someone's house use your speaker phone function - this avoids putting a potentially contaminated phone to your face
- Nurses, paramedics and other emergency services personnel may be more at risk than others - they should take particular care to clean phones after a home visit

WORKING IN OFFICES

Phones never leave people's sides in offices, so employees should be encouraged to think about how/whether they are coming into contact with other people and surfaces:

- Look for ways to use your personal phone less at work - add apps, that you may use regularly, to your desktop, or only check them at certain times during the day
- Avoid using phones while eating and don't take them into unnecessary communal areas, such as canteens and toilets
- Don't place phones on tables and/or other colleague's desks
- Avoid other people touching or handling your phone
- Clean your phone daily when you arrive at the office

WORKING WITH SHARED (DUTY) PHONES

Shared workplace phones are particularly risky and need a complete re-think as this type of device in particular is a hotbed for viruses and bacteria. More robust devices, such as the Cat phones range, that can be thoroughly washed in soap and water, cleaned with generous amounts of gels/ alcohol wipes and even bleach, are an ideal alternative.

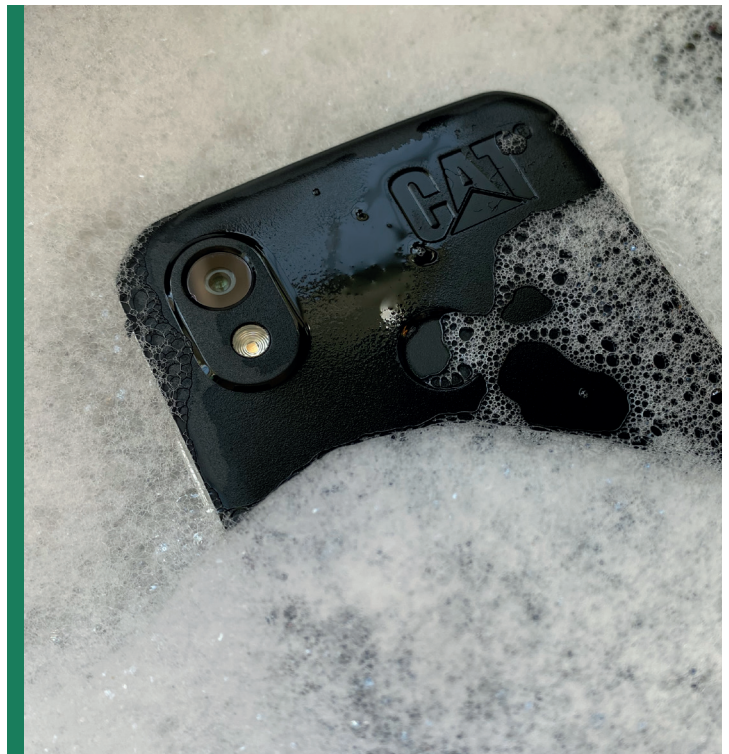
- Duty phones should be given a deep clean at the end of each day before being stored in a safe, sealed and hygienic place overnight
- Clean the phones as thoroughly as possible between users
- Avoid using cases or use phones that do not require protective cases. Cases harbour viruses and bacteria in the same way as phones, and can often be harder to clean
- Duty phone use should be logged and monitored where possible

In some trades and professions, exposure to dirt, grime, germs or harmful substances, requires a smartphone that can be regularly cleaned and thoroughly disinfected. The most effective method is a full submersion in water and detergent.

Many smartphones now claim to be water-resistant with an ingress protection (IP) rating, but only a rugged phone can genuinely handle this treatment. Warranties will often exclude repairs required due to liquid or water damage; check for these exceptions.

Cat rugged phones are designed and specifically tested to be fully submersible in water throughout the life of the product and are able to be cleaned with soaps and disinfectants, or with alcohol wipes. They are tested rigorously and put through pressurised alcohol abrasion tests hundreds of times, as well as bleach wipe tests, and chemical mix exposure and susceptibility tests.

It's advisable to check what testing your phone has been subject to and check its warranty, looking specifically for any exclusions relating to water or liquid damage.



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