



Consultation on Mobile Telephony Interceptors

The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) today published a Consultation Document 04/74 on the use of Mobile Telephony interceptors¹.

Hospitals, prisons, cinemas, theatres and other places have good reason to want to restrict the indiscriminate use of mobile phones and other wireless communications. Common sense and public notices should be enough but where these have proved insufficient, some premises have installed jammers that interfere with the signal from the mobile device resulting in the blocking of all communications including emergency calls. This is both dangerous and illegal. The Commission has already and will continue to take action against the use of such jamming devices in Ireland.

A better solution is an “interceptor” which is effectively a base station that only offers restricted services, such as emergency calls. It does not prohibit all communications.

The Commission is now seeking the views of interested parties on a proposal to permit the limited use of interceptors by licensed public mobile network operators in certain locations under the following conditions:

- only interceptors that are able to recognise emergency numbers or lists of approved numbers can be installed,
- only public mobile network operators can install an interceptor,
- the interceptor can only intercept calls made by the operators own customers in their licensed spectrum unless an agreement is in place with other operators to share interceptors,
- the interceptor cannot cause any degradation of service to another network operator,
- all installations must be notified to ComReg.

With jammers outlawed and interceptors used with very considerable restrictions, the Commission believes that the more fundamental answer to the discourteous use of mobile phones is through education and wider understanding of personal mobile phone etiquette.

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¹ This consultation relates to the potential use of interceptors by licensed mobile phone operators in order to minimise the disruption caused by unwanted use of mobile phones. It does not relate to the interception of Posts and Telecommunications by An Garda Síochána for law enforcement purposes. For further information on the latter please see www.justice.ie .