

Enforcement Bureau

GPS, Wi-Fi, and Cell Phone Jammers Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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GENERAL INFORMATION

1. What are "jammers"?

Generally, "jammers" — which are also commonly called signal blockers, GPS jammers, cell phone jammers, text blockers, etc. — are illegal radio frequency transmitters that are designed to block, jam, or otherwise interfere with authorized radio communications.

2. How do jammers work?

Jamming technology generally does not discriminate between desirable and undesirable communications. A jammer can block all radio communications on any device that operates on radio frequencies within its range (*i.e.*, within a certain radius of the jammer) by emitting radio frequency waves that prevent the targeted device from establishing or maintaining a connection.

For example, jammers can:

- prevent your cell phone from making or receiving calls, text messages, and emails;
- prevent your Wi-Fi enabled device from connecting to the Internet;
- prevent your GPS unit from receiving correct positioning signals; and

- prevent a first responder from locating you in an emergency.

Of course, losing a signal does not necessarily mean that someone nearby is using a jammer. See *also*, [Question 20](#) - Each Time I Visit a Certain Area, I Get the Message “Call Lost.”

3. What laws prohibit the marketing, sale, and use of jammers?

Federal law prohibits the marketing, sale, or use of a transmitter (e.g., a jammer) designed to block, jam, or interfere with wireless communications. See Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. §§ 301, 302a(b), 333.

- *Section 301 of the Communications Act*: “No person shall use or operate any apparatus for the transmission of energy or communications or signals by radio...except under and in accordance with [the Communications] Act and with a license in that behalf granted under the provisions of this Act.” 47 U.S.C. § 301.
- *Section 302(b) of the Communications Act*: “No person shall manufacture, import, sell, offer for sale, or ship devices or home electronic equipment and systems, or use devices, which fail to comply with regulations promulgated pursuant to this section.” 47 U.S.C. § 302a(b).
- *Section 333 of the Communications Act*: “No person shall willfully or maliciously interfere with or cause interference to any radio communications of any station licensed or authorized by or under [the Communications] Act or operated by the United States Government.” 47 U.S.C. § 333.

Jammers cannot be marketed or operated in the United States except in the very limited context of authorized, official use by the federal government.

4. Does the term “marketing” have a specific meaning?

Yes. “Marketing” is defined in the FCC rules as the “sale or lease, or offering for sale or lease, including advertising for sale or lease, or importation, shipment, or distribution for the purpose of selling or leasing or offering for sale or lease.” 47 C.F.R. § 2.803(e)(4).

5. Why are cell phone jammers, Wi-Fi jammers, and GPS jammers illegal?

Jammers are more than just a nuisance; they pose an unacceptable risk to public safety by potentially preventing the transmission of emergency communications. Cell phone jammers do not distinguish between social or other cell phone conversations and an emergency call to a family member or a 9-1-1 emergency responder. Similarly, GPS and Wi-Fi jammers maliciously disrupt both routine and critical communications services.

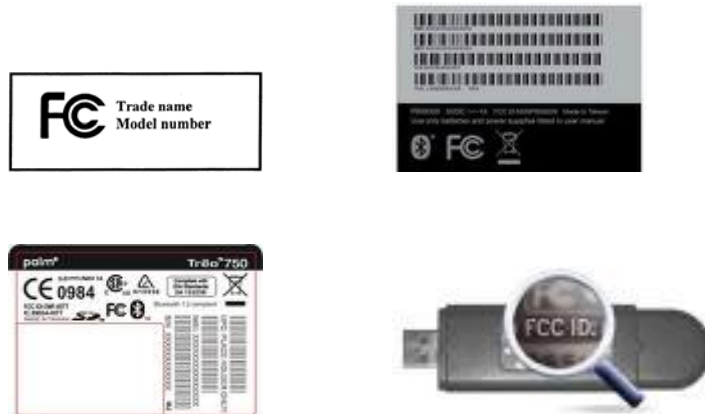
Jammers could also block more than just cell phone calls; these devices could disrupt important communications services that operate on adjacent frequencies, or worse, they could disrupt all communications within a broad frequency range.

6. Some devices claim to block cell phone calls, text messages, and emails only inside a car. Are these illegal as well?

Any device that jams or disrupts cell phone calls, text messages, or other wireless communications by emitting an interfering radio frequency signal is illegal and may not be marketed or operated in the United States, except in the very limited context of authorized, official use by the federal government. Please note that it may be difficult to determine from an advertisement how a particular device functions. You should contact the FCC's Enforcement Bureau at jammerinfo@fcc.gov if you have questions.

We emphasize that consumers *cannot* legally operate any radio transmitting device (e.g., a Wi-Fi or Bluetooth transmitter, wireless phone, etc.) that does not have an authorization from the FCC and that is not properly labeled with an FCC identification number. (See Figure 1 below.)

Figure 1: Sample FCC ID labels



Jamming devices, however, are *ineligible* to receive a grant of equipment authorization from the FCC or an FCC ID. (The FCC's Office of Engineering and Technology oversees the authorization of non-jamming equipment that uses the radio frequency spectrum. More information is available at <http://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/equipment-authorization>.)

7. May I order and import a jammer into the U.S.?

No. Consumers may not order a signal jammer from a foreign retailer and have it shipped into the U.S. The Communications Act prohibits the importation of jamming devices into the U.S. except in limited circumstances that do not apply to consumers. See 47 U.S.C. § 302a(b), (c).

8. What are the penalties for using a jammer? Can I go to prison?

Yes. The unlawful use of a jammer is a criminal offense and can result in various sanctions, including a jail sentence. More specifically, the unlawful marketing, sale, or operation of cell phone, GPS, or other signal jammers in the U.S. can result in:

- significant fines (we call them “monetary forfeitures”) – up to \$16,000 for each violation or each day of a continuing violation, and as high as \$112,500 for any single act;
- government seizure of the illegal equipment; and
- criminal penalties including imprisonment.

See 47 U.S.C. §§ 401, 501, 503, 510; 47 C.F.R. § 1.80(b)(3).

The FCC has taken action against various individuals and business entities for unlawfully operating and marketing jammers. You can find more information on jammer enforcement at www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/jammer-enforcement.

9. What should I do if I already own a jammer?

Any unauthorized person (i.e., anyone other than an authorized federal government user) in possession of a jamming device must immediately cease operation of the device. You can also voluntarily surrender the device to one of the FCC Enforcement Bureau Field Offices (located across the country), by calling the FCC’s Enforcement Bureau at (202) 418-7450 for information about the office nearest you, or by sending an email to jammerinfo@fcc.gov.

10. Whom should I contact if I have additional questions?

For additional information regarding enforcement of the jamming prohibition, visit www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/jammer-enforcement, or contact Kevin Pittman or Neal McNeil of the FCC’s Enforcement Bureau at (202) 418-1160 or jammerinfo@fcc.gov.

MANUFACTURING AND SALES OF JAMMERS

11. Is it illegal to sell a cell phone jammer, GPS jammer, or other jamming device in the U.S. or its Territories?

Yes. The sale, lease, importation, distribution, or marketing of jammers in the U.S. or its Territories is prohibited by federal law. See 47 U.S.C. § 302a(b); 47 C.F.R. § 2.803(a).

There is a very narrow exception. In limited circumstances, the sale of signal jammers for use by authorized federal agencies may be permitted. See 47 U.S.C. § 302a(c); 47 C.F.R. § 2.807(d). Please contact the FCC Enforcement Bureau at jammerinfo@fcc.gov if you have questions about this limited exception.

12. I sell and ship jammers all over the world through a site on the Internet. What should I do to comply with U.S. law?

Manufacturers and retailers of electronic equipment should take affirmative action to comply with U.S. law:

- ① Immediately stop marketing within the United States any equipment that is designed to block, jam, or otherwise interfere with authorized radio communications.
- ② Decline to sell or ship such jamming devices to addresses in the United States or its Territories (except in the very limited context of authorized sales to the federal government). For example, some Internet auction or marketplace websites permit a seller to set up restrictions that automatically block the sale of any item to countries specified by the seller.
- ③ Ensure that any jamming devices manufactured in the United States are available solely for export and are not for sale domestically except to the U.S. government. We note that U.S. manufacturers should be aware that jammers may be unlawful in other countries.

IMPORTANT NOTE ON DISCLAIMERS: We emphasize that it is insufficient and misleading for manufacturers and retailers to include a disclaimer on their websites or in promotional or advertising materials stating or implying that U.S. consumers bear sole responsibility for complying with the applicable legal obligations. The manufacturer or retailer is also violating the law both by offering the device for sale to U.S. consumers and completing the sales transaction. Use of disclaimers that purport to place the sole burden on the buyer cannot absolve the manufacturer or retailer of liability.

13. I sell signal jammers on my website but make certain to notify potential buyers that the jammers may only be purchased, leased, or operated in the U.S. by authorized federal agents. Can I be prosecuted if an unauthorized purchaser ignores this warning?

Even with such a notice, a seller will still be subject to prosecution if it sells a jammer to an unauthorized person in the U.S.

Because Internet sales often target a worldwide audience, some Internet retailers display a disclaimer advising that the purchaser bears sole responsibility for ensuring that the purchase or importation complies with the applicable laws. Although a prominent notice on a webpage warning that the device may not be purchased, leased, or operated in the U.S. would be helpful to consumers, no such notification or disclaimer of responsibility will relieve a seller of its individual liability if an unauthorized sale is made.

14. Can I legally manufacture a jammer in the U.S.?

Possibly. Manufacturers should ensure that any jamming devices manufactured in the U.S. are available solely for export and are not for sale domestically, except in the limited context of authorized sales to the federal government. See 47 U.S.C. § 302a(c); 47 C.F.R. § 2.807(d). Please contact the FCC Enforcement Bureau at jammerinfo@fcc.gov if you

have questions about this limited exception. We note that U.S. manufacturers should be aware that jammers may be unlawful in other countries.

USE AND OPERATION OF JAMMERS

15. Can I operate a jammer in the U.S.?

No. It is a violation of federal law to operate jammers in the United States, except for authorized, official use by the U.S. government.

16. I live outside the continental U.S. – in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, or Guam. Do the restrictions on operating jammers apply to me?

Yes. The Communications Act forbids the use of jamming devices in the U.S. and its Territories.

17. I don't use my cell jammer in public. Can I use it in my own home, business, or vehicle?

No. Jamming devices may not be used regardless of whether the device is operated on public or private property. If you own a jammer, do not continue to operate it. You risk substantial fines (of up to \$16,000 for *each* violation or *each day* of a continuing violation, or up to \$112,000 for a single act); seizure of the device by the government; and criminal imprisonment. Signal jammers do not respect property lines, and federal law provides no exception that allows for the private or commercial use of a jammer.

18. I am a local government official and I would like to ensure compliance with laws that prohibit cell phone use at certain times or in certain places. May a cell phone jammer be used in this context?

No. The Communications Act does not exempt state or local government officials from the prohibition on jammers. Similarly, state and local school systems are also prohibited from using cell phone jammers. Use of cell phone jammers poses an unacceptable risk to public safety.

Jammers cannot be marketed or operated in the United States, except in the very limited context of authorized, official use by the federal government. See 47 U.S.C. § 302a(c); 47 C.F.R. § 2.807(d).

19. I am a principal or school teacher and would like to use a jammer to limit cell phone calls and texting during school hours. May I do so?

No. It is a violation of federal law to operate a jamming device within the U.S. Cell phone jammers do not distinguish between social or other cell phone conversations and an

emergency call to a family member or a 9-1-1 emergency responder. In an emergency, use of a cell jammer can pose a threat to both students and staff by preventing communications with police or emergency services.

In other words, jammers, even if carefully targeted, create risks of interference outside their intended zone of operations and can thereby disrupt critical communications by public safety providers, as well as the legitimate communications of passersby.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT JAMMERS

20. Each time I visit a certain area, I get the message “Call Lost” or I can’t make or receive calls on my cell phone. I suspect that someone is using a cell phone jammer, but how can I tell for sure?

Losing a signal does not necessarily mean that someone nearby is using a cell phone jammer. In fact, signal loss can be caused by many factors, such as signal blockage by buildings or natural obstructions, unusually heavy call volume in the area, being too far from a cell tower, or being outside of a service provider’s coverage or roaming area. Cell phone users are encouraged to contact their service provider to ensure that coverage is available. If there are no service disruptions and there is interference to authorized communications, the FCC’s Enforcement Bureau may use specialized equipment to identify the specific location of a jammer.

21. Can I help stop jammers?

Yes. You can notify the Enforcement Bureau about the illegal sale or use of jamming devices by filing a complaint.

- *Sale of Illegal Jamming Devices:* You may come across several jamming devices advertised on the Internet. If you have reason to suspect that a company sells jammers in the U.S. and does not restrict such sales to authorized federal government users, you should contact the FCC’s Enforcement Bureau through the online complaint portal, www.fcc.gov/complaints.

Additionally, some online auctions or websites allow you to notify them of the sale of products that are illegal or that otherwise violate their terms of service by clicking on a “flag” or “report abuse” link.

- *Use of Illegal Jamming Devices:* If you have information regarding the use of a jammer in the U.S., you should contact the FCC’s Enforcement Bureau through the FCC’s online complaint portal, www.fcc.gov/complaints.

See also, [Question 22](#) - How do I file a jamming complaint?

22. How do I file a jamming complaint with the FCC's Enforcement Bureau?

To file a complaint alerting the FCC's Enforcement Bureau to illegal cell, GPS, or other jamming devices, please visit www.fcc.gov/complaints, or call 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY.

Sale of Illegal Jamming Devices: If your complaint is about the sale of illegal jamming devices, please provide the following information in your complaint:

- the website address and retailer name;
- the name and product number of the jammers that were advertised;
- the date you viewed the advertisement; and
- any additional information that you believe could be relevant.

Use of Illegal Jamming Devices: If your complaint is about the use of illegal jamming devices, please include the following information in your complaint:

- the time(s) of the occurrence;
- the date(s) of the occurrence;
- the location of the occurrence;
- the name of the person or company operating the jammer;
- the facts and circumstances that support your belief that a jammer was being used (in addition to loss of signal or poor reception); and
- any additional information that you believe could be relevant.

23. I'd like to file a complaint, but have a question about the jamming prohibition. Whom should I contact?

Additional materials and information regarding enforcement of the jammer prohibition is available at www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/jammer-enforcement.

For more information, you may also contact Kevin Pittman or Neal McNeil of the FCC's Enforcement Bureau at (202) 418-1160 or jammerinfo@fcc.gov.