



BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Cellphones are charged and prepped for testing at RF Exposure Lab in San Marcos, Calif. The Tribune hired the lab to test 11 phone models.

Some phones measure over federal safety limit

FCC to investigate after reviewing Tribune tests of radiofrequency radiation

BY SAM ROE

The Apple iPhone 7 was set to operate at full power and secured below a tub of clear liquid, specially formulated to simulate human tissue.

With the push of a button, a robotic arm swung into action, sending a pencil-thin probe dipping into the tub. For 18 minutes, it repeatedly measured the amount of radiofrequency radiation the liquid was absorbing from the cellphone.

This test, which was paid for by the Tribune and conducted according to federal guidelines at an accredited lab, produced a surprising result: Radiofrequency radiation exposure from the iPhone 7 — one of the most popular smartphones ever sold — measured over the legal safety limit and more than double what



CAMILLE FINE/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Around-the-clock cellphone use represents one of the most dramatic cultural shifts in decades.

Apple reported to federal regulators from its own testing.

The Federal Communications Commission, which is responsible for regulating phones, states on its website that if a cellphone has been approved for sale, the device “will never exceed” the maximum allowable exposure limit. But this phone, in an

independent lab inspection, had done exactly that.

The Tribune tested three more brand-new iPhone 7s at full power, and these phones also measured over the exposure limit. In all, 11 models from four companies were tested, with varying results.

The Tribune’s testing, though

limited, represents one of the most comprehensive independent investigations of its kind, and the results raise questions about whether cellphones always meet safety standards set up to protect the public.

After reviewing the lab reports from the Tribune’s tests, the FCC said it would take the rare step of conducting its own testing over the next couple of months.

“We take seriously any claims on non-compliance with the RF (radiofrequency) exposure standards and will be obtaining and testing the subject phones for compliance with FCC rules,” agency spokesman Neil Grace said.

The Tribune set out a year ago to explore an important question: Are cellphones as safe as manufacturers and government regulators say?

Though it’s unclear whether radiofrequency radiation from cellphones can increase cancer

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