



by Ned Hickson

## Newest cell phone feature is so hot you may need a fire extinguisher—Really.

Technology is great. Except, of course, when it explodes in your pants. I've never really liked cell phones to begin with, and now that they've started self detonating, I like them even less.

According to a news article sent in by Susan Grigsby of Alpharetta, Ga., Nokia has launched an investigation into why two of its cell phones recently burst into flames — a feature Nokia officials say wasn't supposed to become available until next year. As you might expect, cell phone sales have dropped slightly as a

result of these incidents. That's because luxuries like instant text messaging, computer games and video imaging don't mean much if your cell phone suddenly ignites into flames, turning your morning commute into a flaming lap dance and an appearance on *The World's Wildest Police Chases*.

It would be different if exploding cell phones were an optional feature, i.e., for an extra charge, you, as a cell phone customer, had the option of detonating someone else's cell phone with the press of a button.

"Hello? That's okay—the movie just started. What? Really? No way. And what did SHE say?"

"Warning! Detonation sequence has been initiated! Beginning count-

down! Five..! Four..!"

"Hey—you mind if call you back? My phone's about to explode."

While Nokia officials are blaming defective batteries as the root cause of Exploding Cell Phone Syndrome, I have to disagree. The fact is, cell phones are simply being asked to do too much and, because of it, are having a total melt down. I've had my cell phone for five years, which by today's standards means it should be part of a traveling history exhibit for school children. However, I've kept it because 1) unlike newer phones, it's larger than a Saltine cracker and doesn't have buttons the size of Braille, and 2) it provides me with all the functions I need in a cell phone:

I can call people.

People can call me. I can hang up on people. That's all I'm really looking for in a cell phone. If I wanted to play video games and exchange text messages with friends, I'd just stay at work.

Comparatively, the life expectancy of today's cell phones is about one year. That's assuming everything goes well and you don't go blind trying to use it, and out of sheer frustration while trying to place a call to your ophthalmologist, end up crushing it in your fist like a grape.

In most cases, this isn't covered under warranty. The same thing goes for any damage your phone might incur after accidentally triggering a gas-station explosion. That's right. According to a recent warning from AAA,

static discharge from cell phones "has the potential to ignite gas vapors, although it's still safer than if your cell phone actually explodes."

Because of this danger the National Fire Protection Association has offered a couple of tips to motorists.

The first is to avoid using cell phones, laptop computers or portable radios while refueling. And if you happen to be using them all at once, you're

just asking for trouble. Be safe; at least wait until you're back on the highway.

And most importantly, if a fire starts, don't try to stop it. Leave the area and call someone.

Unless of course that's the reason the fire started in the first place.

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