

# Airline grounds in-flight phone service

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**Airlines are throwing away those phones built into the seats, and they're blaming it all on cell phones.**

American Airlines will discontinue its AT&T in-flight phone service by March 31, a spokesman for the airline said Wednesday.

"Almost since their installation in 1996, we've seen a dramatic decrease in the use of these phones," said American Airlines spokesman Todd Burke, who added that the service averages about three calls a day per aircraft.

Southwest Airlines started removing AT&T phones from its planes Aug. 1 last year.

"We've noticed with the prevalence of cell phones that passengers just weren't using the in-flight service," said Beth Harbin, a spokeswoman for Southwest, which allows passengers to make mobile phone calls until the aircraft doors close before takeoff.

The phone service on American costs \$2.99 to connect a call to AT&T's land-based network and then charges \$7.60 a minute, plus tax, substantially more than the cost of a cell phone call in an airport terminal.

Burke would not say when the decision was reached, only that AT&T and American jointly decided to halt the service recently.

American will stop the service by March 31 and then take steps to remove the phones from its airplanes.

The airline will keep other communication services working. Passengers on Boeing 777 and Boeing 767-300 aircraft, which mainly fly international routes, will continue to offer an in-flight phone service that connects to an orbiting satellite for a \$5 connection fee and a rate of \$10 a minute.

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