

Use of Mobile Telephones and Wireless Communication Devices

Summary This Guideline provides direction to NSW Health organisations in respect to the use of mobile telephones and wireless communication devices within the NSW public health system.

Document type Guideline

Document number GL2023_010

Publication date 03 April 2023

Author branch Strategic Capital Planning and Asset Management

Branch contact (02) 9391 9000

Review date 03 April 2027

Policy manual Not applicable

File number H22/37982

Status Active

Functional group Clinical/Patient Services - Aids and Appliances, Information and Data
Corporate Administration - Asset Management, Information and Data
Personnel/Workforce - Conduct and ethics, Occupational Health and Safety
Population Health - Environmental

Applies to Public Health Units, Local Health Districts, Board Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Chief Executive Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Specialty Network Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Affiliated Health Organisations, NSW Health Pathology, Public Health System Support Division, Cancer Institute, Community Health Centres, NSW Ambulance Service, Dental Schools and Clinics, Public Hospitals

Distributed to Ministry of Health, Public Health System, Divisions of General Practice, Government Medical Officers, NSW Ambulance Service, Environmental Health Officers of Local Councils, Private Hospitals and Day Procedure Centres, Health Associations Unions, Tertiary Education Institutes

Audience Clinicians;Nurses;Allied Health Staff;Emergency Department;Administration

Use of Mobile Telephones and Wireless Communication Devices

GUIDELINE SUMMARY

This Guideline provides directions to NSW Health organisations in respect to the use of mobile telephones and wireless communication devices within the NSW public health system.

It considers the most recent scientific evidence as to the effect of mobile telephones and other wireless communication devices on electronic medical equipment. The recommendations for the use of wireless communication devices in this Guideline supports safe environments for patients.

KEY PRINCIPLES

The use of mobile telephones and all wireless communication devices should be discouraged in critical areas where usually a high number of medical devices are used to provide critical support to patients.

Areas where mobile telephone or wireless communication device use is not permitted should be clearly marked. Any such device should be powered off or turn the device to aeroplane mode when carried in areas that have not been designated for wireless communication device use. Where this is not possible, staff should maintain a safe distance of 1 metre from the medical equipment.

Patients should move away from medical equipment when using mobile/ wireless communication devices and ensure that they are separated by a distance of 1 metre. Where this is not possible, the patient should be instructed to power off or turn the device to aeroplane mode while the medical device is in use.

Mobile/ wireless communication devices should not be placed on top of, or in direct contact with any medical device.

Clinicians should be encouraged to leave their phones at reception or at nurses' station and to move away from medical equipment when making or receiving calls.

Two-way radio, including walkie-talkie devices should not be turned on in the vicinity of medical equipment. If this is not possible, a distance of no closer than 3 metres from medical equipment is recommended.

NSW Health organisations should continue to monitor the use of newer types of transmitting equipment to ensure that they do not impact on the operation of medical equipment. When introducing new medical equipment or wireless communication equipment for the first time in the hospital, sufficient information on possible electromagnetic interference (EMI) should be obtained.

It is recommended that an existing committee within the NSW Health organisation take responsibility for the management of the use of wireless communications within each facility and produce site specific policies, procedures and training.

Training should be provided to create awareness and educate hospital staff about the basic concepts of EMI, devices which are likely to be adversely affected, actions to take if EMI is observed or suspected, and procedures to report instances of EMI.

It is encouraged for mobile telephones and similar wireless communication devices to be connected to the hospital facility's Wi-Fi network for internet access, where available.

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Approved By	Amendment Notes
GL2023_010 April-2023	Deputy Secretary, Financial Services and Asset Management & Chief Financial Officer	Revisions to the Guideline have ensured the recommendations are consistent with current technologies and as a result the recommendations of the Guideline have not changed.
GL2005_045 January-2008	Director-General	New Guideline