

# Are Cell Phones Killing Us?

The real word on radiation data.

By Alice Hill

When I lived in New York, I would regularly see a woman camped in front of my subway station wearing a bulging ski cap easily twice the size of her head. A report on the local news one night explained this mystery—something called “foil heads.” According to the report, people like the woman I saw believed that surrounding the head with aluminum foil would protect them from harmful radiation they could feel piercing their brains from nearby TV stations and radio antennas.

Because of the hysteria surrounding cell phone radiation,

**All cell phones made today fall under acceptable levels of radiation providing you do not hold them against your brain for over an hour.**

I do believe that some people are just about to resort to aluminum foil again. Are we in danger when we use our cell phones, or is fearing radiation as crazy as packing a ski cap with foil?

## Just the Facts

Here's what we do know. Cell phones produce radiofrequency

radiation (RF) in the microwave band. At high levels, this can cause biological damage from the heat produced—much like a microwave oven. What we don't know is whether or not damage occurs at very low RF levels.

In 2000 the FCC created a measurement called Specific Absorption Rate (SAR) to give consumers data on the radiation levels their phones produce. You can look up your own phone's rating at the mobile search engine: [domode.com](http://domode.com). All three of the government agencies studying cell phone safety (the Federal Communications Commission, the Food and Drug Administration and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration), as well as the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, have concluded that all cell phones made today fall under acceptable levels of radiation—providing you do not hold them against your brain for over an hour.

As a precaution the FDA recommends two tips: Use a mobile phone with an antenna that is located outside the car, or a headset with a remote antenna to a mobile phone carried at the waist (a complete FCC guide to RF Safety can be found at [fcc.gov/oet/rfsafety](http://fcc.gov/oet/rfsafety)). Continuous talk time seems to be the biggest threat, so keep your calls under an hour and get a headset. It looks a lot better under a ski cap anyway. •



## Hang Up and Drive

Radiation from cell phones might not kill you, but driving and talking could. Collision risk increases fourfold when a cell phone is used while driving. If you need to use your phone while driving, follow these safety tips to minimize the risks:

1. When possible, pull over to the side of the road and put on your hazard lights before you place a call.
2. If you have to use your phone in traffic, use a hands-free device so both hands can remain on the wheel. Although hands-free phones can't eliminate the most hazardous distraction—the phone conversation itself—they do minimize the risk associated with dialing.
3. Avoid emotional or intense phone conversations. If you must talk on the phone while you drive, keep the calls short and to the point.
4. Call when there's no other traffic around. Drivers on the phone tend to pay less attention to speed and lane maintenance.
5. Be aware that phone conversations are distracting—you need to adjust your use of the phone to accommodate that. Drivers on the phone tend to pay less attention to speed and lane maintenance. When you make a call about a road emergency or accident, remember that rubbernecking often leads to congestion and driver distraction, so adjust your driving accordingly.

Source: Cars.com. Adapted from [cars.com/carsapp/national/?&srv=parser&act=display&tf=/features/drivenow/drivenow\\_index.tpl](http://cars.com/carsapp/national/?&srv=parser&act=display&tf=/features/drivenow/drivenow_index.tpl)

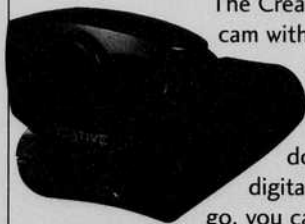
## GADGETS

### High-Tech Toys: Better Living Through Technology

By Jane Kim

#### Creative Labs Video Blaster Web Cam Go Plus (\$149.99)

The Creative Labs team has come up with a web cam with all the perks: The Go Plus allows you to videoconference, send full-motion video e-mail, and create eye-catching multimedia web sites. The best part is that it doubles as a full-color digital camera and digital voice recorder—so when you're on the go, you can capture precious moments and create photos that literally talk ([creativelabs.com](http://creativelabs.com)).



#### Ionic Breeze Car Air Purifier (\$59.95)

Stop trying to cover up lingering cigarette smoke and the stink of sweaty sports equipment in your car. It's time to toss that cardboard dangly thing and opt for something that



works. The electrostatic Ionic Breeze promises to purify and de-cootify even the stuffiest of cars by trapping odors and neutralizing the air. Even cooler—its blinking red lights simulate a car alarm to scare off those prowling car-jackers ([sharperimage.com](http://sharperimage.com)).

#### Motorola V2282 (starts at \$99)

Listen to your favorite tunes and get your calls with Motorola's FM Radio Phone. The V2282 is single-band, and its built-in microbrowser allows you to access the Internet. It comes with stereo headphones and a hands-free mike so you can browse the stations in between and during calls ([motorola.com](http://motorola.com)).

