

Camera Phones Can Make All of Us Feel Like We Are Living In A Fishbowl



By Eric Sinrod,

We are at the point now that cell phones have become ubiquitous — for good and for bad. They obviously present incredible convenience, as users can be reached and can place calls anytime, anywhere. But with that has come tremendous annoyance at times.

Practically all of us have been bothered by the rings of cell phones and loud conversations by their users in public places such as restaurants, theaters, buses, trains and so on. And it doesn't stop there, as cell phones have morphed into camera phones, presenting further convenience in terms of spontaneous photography, but even greater potential intrusions on privacy.

For this reason, a few years back, the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) created a "Camera Phone Code of Conduct" to guide proper etiquette regarding camera phone use, which remains highly relevant today. While the Code does not have the binding force of law, it certainly is a good start in shaping appropriate camera phone use and in seeking to prevent annoyance and in attempting to protect privacy.

The following seven guidelines form the framework of the Camera Code of Conduct:

1. Camera phones should not be used where photographic equipment is typically banned, such as in museums, movie theaters, and live performances. Users should be on the lookout for signs posted in public places that address whether photographic equipment is banned.
2. Camera phones should not be used in public areas that normally are considered private by people who use them, such as bathrooms, changing rooms and gym locker rooms.
3. Camera phones should not be used without authorization to record or transfer confidential information. This may apply within a corporate, government or educational environment.
4. Camera phones should not be used to take photographs of individuals without their knowledge or consent.
5. Users should be cautious about taking photos of people under the age of 18.
6. Users should refrain from using the camera function of a phone when operating a motor vehicle.

7. Camera phone users should always respect the privacy of others. Photography of individuals without their consent, and when and where they have a reasonable expectation of privacy, may violate applicable laws.

Following these guidelines doesn't just exhibit good manners. It can prevent annoyance, avoid privacy invasions, avert intentional or unintentional theft trade secrets, promote safety and (to some extent) protect against potential legal liability.

Plainly, not everything should be fair game for camera phones.

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