

A 'RING, RING' MAY COST YOU YOUR JOB

The Federal Railroad Administration has a stark message for rail workers with safety-related duties:

Only use your cell phone when allowed or you could lose your job.

Emergency Order No. 26, which went into effect in October 2008, restricts the use by train crews and others in safety-sensitive positions of cell phones and other electronic devices.

The ban becomes permanent in March.

There is not an exception for personal emergencies.

How serious is the FRA about compliance?

The FRA warns that it can and will subpoena cell phone records, which show the date, time and location of cell-phone use.

In fact, when an accident occurs, the FRA routinely subpoenas the cell-phone records of all crew members involved, and sometimes of those employees on adjacent trains or yard crews.

If the FRA finds that a rail employee in a safety-sensitive position used their cell phone unlawfully during their tour of duty (even if it was hours before the accident) **the FRA will notify the employer, who will then terminate the employee.**

Workers found violating the ban also face being taken out of service by the FRA, and they face a \$25,000 civil fine.

Be aware, also, that carriers may set up a sting to catch you in violation of the ban, such as by calling your cell phone number under the guise of testing compliance with the ban.

The simplest means of avoiding violation of the emergency order is to turn off all personal electronic devices when reporting for duty, stow them away from your person, and not retrieve or activate them until you are relieved from duty by the carrier.

THE EASIEST WAY TO AVOID TROUBLE? IF IN DOUBT, DON'T.