



[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Camera phones don't click at work

By Stephanie Armour, USA TODAY

Some major employers are banning camera phones on the job amid growing fears the high-tech gadgets pose serious threats to workers' privacy and company secrets.

The phones, which average about \$150, allow users to take pictures and transmit them globally.

Companies fear employees will use the phones to send images of new products or other company information, or else to take pictures of unsuspecting co-workers in locker rooms or bathrooms.

A growing number of employers are cracking down:

- At DaimlerChrysler, a policy drafted in September bars employees and visitors from bringing camera phones into any company building.

- Employees and visitors to General Motors' product development plants can't bring in camera phones. Also, the company won't supply employees with cell phones that have a camera feature.

Employees entering those research areas must "surrender camera phones and reclaim them when they go out," says Chris Preuss at General Motors. "It's for security reasons."

- Employees at Texas Instruments can bring their camera phones to work but are forbidden to take pictures.

Bans have also affected the public. At the Oakland County Courthouse in Pontiac, Mich., posted signs warn that camera phones aren't allowed. The policy was adopted in November.

"Our concern was the photographing of jurors and witnesses, such as undercover agents," says Chief Judge Wendy Potts.

Some labor lawyers are fielding more questions from companies grappling with the new concerns. "What makes the technology worrisome to employers is it has the ability to capture and transmit images so fast," says Scott McDonald, a labor lawyer at Littler Mendelson in Dallas. "In the old world, you would take a picture with a small camera and smuggle it out."

It's an issue overseas, too. In Munich, BMW spokesman Jochen Frey says the company has signs in the lobby of its technical center banning cameras and camera phones. In South Korea, Samsung bans camera phones on the job.

Camera phones made up 4% of global handset sales in 2002, according to Boston-based Strategy Analytics. By the end of 2005, more than a quarter of global handset sales will be camera phones. "A policy on camera phones is going to be standard," says Eddie Tapiero, an analyst at Strategy Analytics.

He and other analysts say demand for the phones is so strong that such policies should not hamper sales.

Contributing: David Kiley