

Electronic and Wireless Devices Policy

Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta

Effective January 2012



Purpose

This policy sets out guidelines for the use of electronic and wireless devices in the courthouse. It is intended to promote the fairness of the administration of justice.

Scope

Definition: "Electronic and wireless devices" includes computers, laptops, tablets, notebooks, cellular phones, smartphones, PDAs, iPhones, iPads, iPods, and any other electronic device.

Application: This policy applies to media, members of the Bar and members of the public in Court of Queen's Bench courthouses throughout the Province of Alberta.

Jurors: If you are a juror, the presiding justice will provide you with specific directions which will supersede the directions contained in this policy.

Authority of Judge: Notwithstanding any clause in this policy, the use of electronic and wireless devices in courtrooms is subject to the direction or order of the presiding judge, who retains the discretion to allow or prohibit their possession and use.

Policy

Electronic and wireless devices are permitted in the courthouse and in courtrooms, subject to the following restrictions: --

1. **All devices must be turned off in courtrooms.**
2. The following are **exempted** from this restriction:
 - counsel
 - members of the media who have signed an undertaking with the Court
3. Penalties:

Anyone who, in the opinion of the presiding judge, court staff or court security personnel, engages in unacceptable use may be:

- instructed to turn off their electronic device
- instructed to forfeit their electronic device while in the courtroom
- asked to leave the courtroom
- cited for contempt of court, the penalty being at the discretion of the presiding judge

Definition of Unacceptable Use:

Unacceptable use anywhere in the courthouse, including courtrooms, is any use that breaches this policy, causes a disturbance, interferes with court operations, or is offensive.

Examples of unacceptable use, as determined by a judge, court staff or court security personnel, are:

- a. Causing interference with court sound systems or other technology, whether deliberate or inadvertent
- b. Taking photographs or movies of anyone in a courtroom, or anywhere in the courthouse
- c. Making an audio recording of proceedings in any courtroom, jury room, chambers or hearing room unless permitted by the presiding judge or by court policy (media)
- d. In the courtroom or hearing room, any use inconsistent with court business
- e. Any use that may lead to a breach of privacy or courtroom decorum, or interferes with the administration of justice.

Note on Availability of Wireless Networking – The Court takes no responsibility for the availability, performance or security of the wireless network or of any device using the network. Troubleshooting and technical support are the sole responsibility of the owner of the electronic device.

If you have any questions about this policy, please check with security personnel in the courthouse, or contact:

Michelle Somers
Executive Legal Officer
403-297-5003
michelle.somers@albertacourts.ca