

ETCETERA

Thursday, Feb. 1, 2001

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PLEASE HANG UP...

*and try your call somewhere else**Bad etiquette is quickly turning cell phones from a blessing to a curse*BY AMY WEST
Staff Writer

It's a common sight — the business executive with the cell phone pressed to his ear, no matter where he happens to be at the time.

Cell users sometimes seem to forget that other people, non-cell users for instance, may not appreciate the behaviour.

The ringing of cell phones in restaurants, stores, movie theatres, even churches has become commonplace.

Mobile communications is a \$4-billion business in Canada. One in three citizens owns some type of mobile communications device. If current trends continue, it's estimated that more than half of Canadians will use mobile devices to communicate within the next few years. With this increase comes the responsibility of safe and courteous use.

As with any new technology, there is no written list of rules about how these devices should be used. But according to the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association (CWTA), the authority on wireless issues, developments and trends in Canada, there is such a thing as common sense and common courtesy. And in the interests of both, the CWTA offers guidelines for cell users.

"Always turn your phone or pager off, mute the ringer or use the silent vibrating ring mode when you are at the theatre, at a restaurant, in libraries or classrooms, in churches or anywhere else where quiet is important," said Marc Choma, director of communications at CWTA.

"If you can divert your calls to voicemail and retrieve them when you can be assured you're not disturbing another person. If you must take a call in a quiet environment, move to the lobby, another room or outside."

Other CWTA recommendations include:

- When you're in an enclosed public space, such as an elevator or a bus, remember that oth-

ers around usually don't want to listen to your conversations. And if they do want to listen, you may be sharing confidential or personal information that is best not shared. Be discreet. Either switch your phone off or answer it immediately and say that you will call back. If you must take a call, keep your voice down and keep your call short to avoid disturbing others.

- When driving, make safe driving your first call. Pull over to the side of the road to make or take a call. Or use a headset or hands-free kit while driving to make it easier to keep your eyes on the road and both hands on the wheel. And let voicemail answer the call if the traffic is busy or driving conditions are poor. Don't let your conversation distract you from operating your vehicle safely.

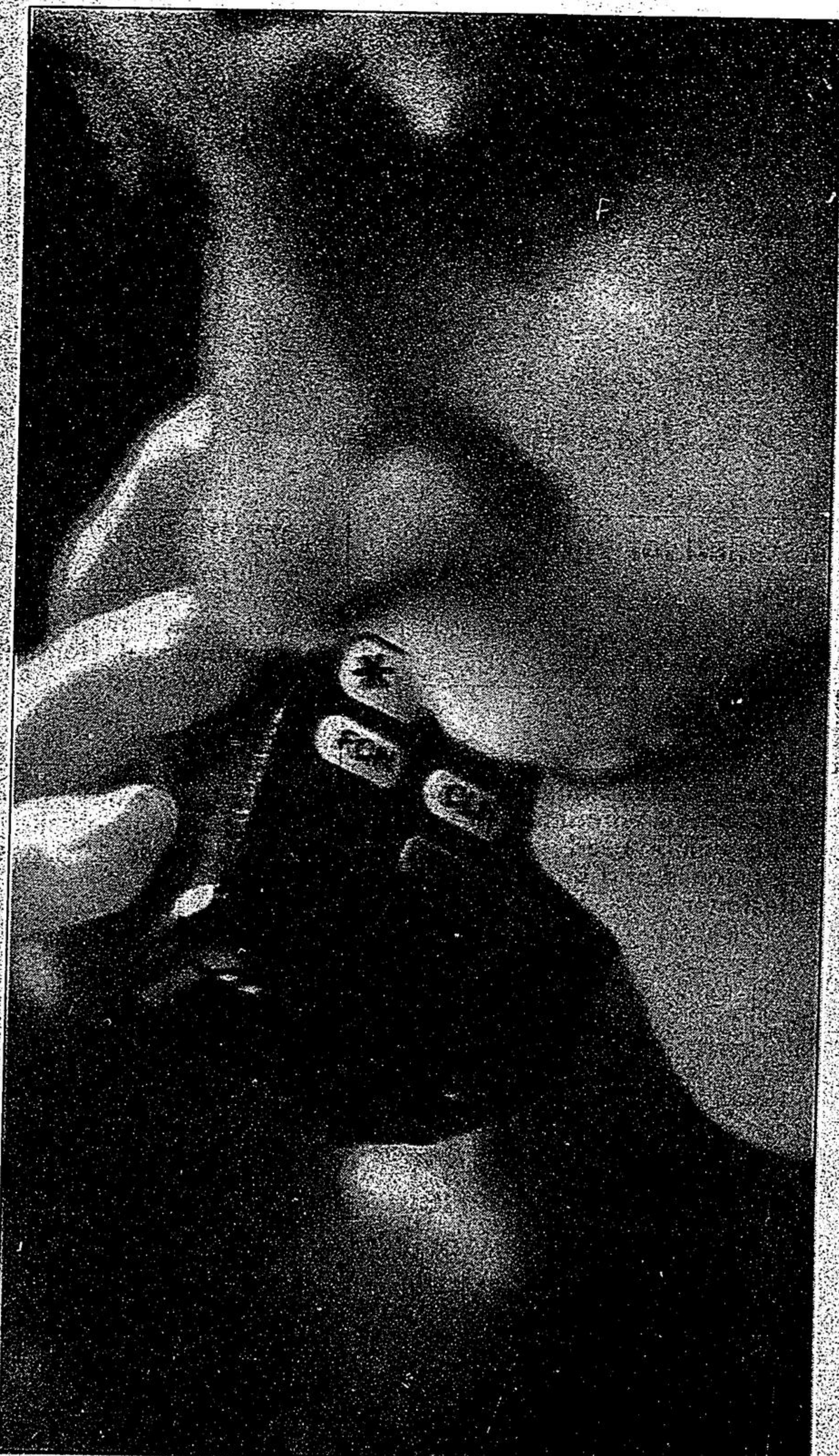
- When you're in a meeting or at a party, remember that the people you're with should take priority. Turn your phone or pager off, mute the ringer or use the silent vibrating ring mode. Ask others to do the same. If you're waiting for an important call, let others know in advance. And if you must take a call, excuse yourself to hold the conversation in a more private place.

A complete etiquette list can be found on the CWTA website (www.cwta.com) and CWTA literature will soon be available when you buy your cell phone.

"We don't have anything right now that we distribute in retail outlets, so we refer people to the CWTA website for any questions they have about the dos and don'ts of cell-phone use," said Sarah Sterling, public relations consultant for Clearnet Wireless Inc. "But Clearnet is putting together a new etiquette brochure that should be ready in the next month."

"We have also made the trailer you see at movies asking you to turn your phones off in the theatre."

Tina Jackman, who has been in the food service industry for nine years, wishes someone would tell her customers to power down their phones. "I don't know if they think it makes them look important or if they're just rude," said Jackman. "Usually I'll just ignore them until they put their phones down."



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Cell phone use — and misuse — is becoming common in our society. With this increase in technology comes an increased responsibility to use phones in a safe and courteous manner.

York Region residents, police calling for cell phone safety legislation

BY JEROME WATT

Special to The Economist & Sun/Tribune

Newmarket's Rick Smith knows he shouldn't use the cell phone while driving, but he does.

The push to ban drivers from using cell phones has the support of most York Region officials and residents.

Judy Betts of Oak Ridges would like to see people pull over when they use their cell phones and doesn't think hands-free phones are the answer, either.

"I still think you are distracted," she said. "People survived before they had cell phones."

It depends how a person uses the device, according to Newmarket resident James Warring.

"I feel, if you are paying attention, it's OK," he said. "It's better if you use a hands-free set."

And the distraction can continue even after the call is ended. Drivers continue to think about the conversation, leaving them at higher risk of collision, said Carol Tobia, public health nurse for York Region's injury prevention committee.

"At this point in time, I would advise people to pull over (when using a cell phone)," she said. "People don't listen to us. I tell you that. Enforcement would be the next step."

Kathy Dolan, at Telus Mobility says her company strongly encourages people to pull over when using the phone.

"Make driving your first priority," she said. "If you are driving, let voicemail be your secretary."

But it's not fair to pick only on cell phones, she said.

"There are a number of distractions when you are driving," Dolan said. "Cell phones are one of many distractions. Road signs, conversations with other passengers or disciplining children take away from the concentration of the driver."

Calls for legislation banning the use of cell phones by drivers have increased after a Jan. 12 accident in Peel Region left a woman in critical condition.

Tory backbencher John O'Toole introduced a private member's bill last week calling for a ban on drivers using hand-held cell phones.

Provincial politicians in York Region agree something needs to be done.

A spokesperson for Al Palladini, MPP for

Vaughan-King-Aurora, said he supports O'Toole's private member's bill.

"When he was minister (of transport), he supported hands-free use of the cellular phone," said Susan Manning, press secretary for the MPP.

But Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees wants to review the bill before making a decision.

"I don't think it merits a knee-jerk reaction," he said. "I think the bill should be referred to a standing committee."

Julia Munro, MPP for York North, said the hand-held devices are notorious for distracting people while they are driving.

She said she would support the legislation as well.

"My position is the same," said York Regional Police chief Bob Middaugh. "I favour a ban on cell phones while driving."