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iPhone gives wrong type of warm glow

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ELEANOR HALL: When the iPhone 4 was released it was one of the world's hottest phones. Now it's actually caught fire on board an Australian plane.

Regional Express Airlines issued a statement today saying that on a flight from Sydney to Lismore a passenger's phone began emitting dense smoke and a red glow, as Matt Wordsworth reports.

MATT WORDSWORTH: Regional Express flight ZL319 was on the tarmac at Sydney airport when the incident happened.

A statement from REX says a passenger's phone began producing a significant amount of dense smoke, accompanied by a red glow.

It goes on to say a flight attendant immediately extinguished the handset and no one was harmed.

A photo has been provided showing what appears to be an iPhone 4.

Scorching about the size of a thumbnail is visible on the rear casing and the glass surface has been shattered. It's not known whether that was caused by the heat or by efforts to extinguish it.

REX says the incident was immediately reported to the Air Transport Safety Bureau and the phone has been handed over for analysis.

It says it will await the outcome of the probe for further direction.

The ATSB says it will consult with the airline and the phone manufacturer during its investigation but has no previous record of a smart phone self igniting.

Chris Althaus is chief executive of the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association, which represents mobile phone makers.

CHRIS ALTHAUS: Manufacturers require their products and legislation requires a standard to be followed, rigorous safety checks; very, very rarely have there been any problems of this kind associated with a mainstream manufacturer.

If they are they're very quickly identified and products are withdrawn but as I say it's rare. With so many after market products on the market we're very concerned that people buy the proper products for their phone, particularly batteries, to avoid this sort of outcome.

MATT WORDSWORTH: It's not known if this iPhone was genuine or fake but Mr Althaus says there's a worldwide surge in fake batteries and warned consumers of the risks.

CHRIS ALTHAUS: There is an enormous volume of counterfeit and fake product that is appearing on the market. We urge people to be very careful if they're buying batteries that they buy them from a reputable dealer, look for products that are identified by the manufacturer of your phone as compatible and be very

aware of cheap imitations.

MATT WORDSWORTH: He says the industry is so concerned it's set up a website so people are aware.

CHRIS ALTHAUS: www.spotafakephone.com and it's a website that gives people advice on how to spot fake batteries and chargers and also urges people to stick with the major manufacturers, buy from reputable outlets and certainly be very aware of cheap battery imitations.

MATT WORDSWORTH: But it's not the first problem with Apple's batteries.

The company's first generation of iPod nanos, sold between late 2005 and 2006, were recalled.

They were deemed at risk of overheating as the battery aged and posed a safety risk.

That problem was traced to a single battery supplier and a manufacturing defect.

Apple did not respond to requests for comment on Friday's incident.

ELEANOR HALL: Matt Wordsworth reporting.