

NETWORKS

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iPhone 3G isn't necessarily

Networks place the blame at Apple's door

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Eager punters cooing over their 3G iPhones are finding the third generation connectivity not quite what they had hoped, and according to some reports Apple's super-phone is failing to meet the requirements of the 3G standard.

Apple took a lot of stick when the original iPhone lacked 3G, a decision that forced UK operator O2 to deploy an EDGE network just to support the 2.5G technology the iPhone did have. The new version does support WCDMA (Wideband Code Division Multiple Access - the 3G standard used by GSM networks) but it seems the quality of that support isn't up to much.

At first the networks looked to be at fault, but the global nature of the problem belies that, and T-Mobile Netherlands has gone so far as to post information on the subject squarely blaming Apple's handset for the problems.

Swedish journal *Ny Teknik* has gone into more detail, speaking to engineers who have tested the 3G iPhone and report that the 3G transmissions are well below the level required by the WCDMA standard - the nominal sensitivity is several decibels below what it should be.

Ny Teknik speculates that the prototypes must have had better performance to pass acceptance testing, so the problem presumably crept in during mass production. If true, this points to a hardware fault, which could be tough for Apple to fix.

Every mobile operator selling the iPhone will claim to have tested the sensitivity, but the reality is that once one European operator has passed a device the rest will accept the result on the nod - this leaves more prototypes for senior management to tout at meetings.

No one expects the iPhone to run as fast as advertised (well, almost no one), but if the specs don't meet the standard then the company has some explaining to do. T-Mobile NL is recommending that punters hope for a software update from Apple, but if it's a hardware fault then Apple will probably slide out an improved model at some point while denying there was ever a problem with the original. ®

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