

Redesigned Apple Watch not subject to import ban, US officials determine

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US Customs and Border Protection has determined that Apple's redesigned Apple Watch is not subject to an import ban, according to a Monday court filing. The import ban, issued by the US International Trade Commission (ITC), applies to Apple's current Series 9 and Ultra 2 watches and stems from a patent infringement dispute with the medical-monitoring technology company Masimo. The ITC barred Apple's imports and sales of Apple Watches with technology for reading blood-oxygen levels based on allegations that they infringe two Masimo patents. Apple has included a pulse oximeter feature in smartwatches since its Series 6 Apple Watch in 2020. Apple briefly stopped its sales of its latest Series 9 and Ultra 2 watches in the United States before Christmas due to the ITC decision, though they remained available from other US retailers including Amazon, Best Buy, Costco and Walmart. The ban formally went into effect on 26 December, but Apple convinced a US appeals court to pause the ban the next day and has since resumed selling the watches as it contests the import ruling. Apple had argued that a proposed redesign would moot findings that the watches infringe blood-oxygen reading patents belonging to Masimo. Apple has not publicly described the redesign, which could involve an update to the watches' software. The customs agency's decision could be overruled if the ITC disagrees with it. Masimo accuses Apple of hiring away its employees and stealing its pulse oximetry technology to use in Apple Watches. Apple has countersued, calling Masimo's legal actions a "maneuver to clear a path" for its own competing smartwatch.