

Armor for iPhone

Any onboard PDA or smartphone deserves protection from the elements. For the iPhone, one choice is the OtterBox 2600 PDA case (\$50, www.otterbox.com). At 7 x 4.5 x 1.75 inches, it's bulky, but it provides a great waterproof/bombproof shelter for the phone. It comes with foam inserts that can be adjusted to keep the phone's screen flush against a clear, gasketed membrane. We found good touch sensitivity through the membrane, but there's no access to the exterior volume and screen-shutoff buttons, headphone jack, or the charging/synching port. However, conversation is surprisingly clear through the case, and it truly is tough: We dropped it from shoulder height onto a wood floor, kicked it, then took it outside and tossed it in a snow bank for a while. We also floated it in a sink with paper towels inside to tell of moisture intrusion, floated the iPhone in it, and used it for most of a day with nav app experiments. This would be the case to have in a wet cockpit, a wet gear bag, or a wet shore-going dinghy.

