Built for the frontline, but failing the field? Britain's frontline could be losing around two working weeks every year to fragile technology, new Lenovo research suggests

26 November 2026



New Lenovo research reveals the impact of unsuitable technology on Britain's frontline, as UK workers surveyed across six UK sectors face mounting pressure from demanding conditions and extreme weather.

- Frontline workers surveyed who had experienced tablet or touchscreen failures reported losing an average of 2 working hours per week*, that's around 92 hours a year, an equivalent to more than two 40-hour working weeks every year.
- Almost two-thirds (64%[1]) are concerned that more frequent or extreme weather conditions could make it harder for them to do their job effectively in the future, rising to 77%[1] in construction and 76%[1] in energy.
- Around two-thirds (66%[2]) have used technology described as durable or rugged that has still struggled with the realities of their job, while 82%[2] believe devices can only truly be judged if suitable for frontline work, once used in real working conditions.

November 26, 2026 – Technology failures could be costing Britain's frontline industries around two working weeks every year.[1] According to new research commissioned by Lenovo, frontline workers who had experienced touchscreen failures reported losing an average of 2 working hours per week*, the findings highlight the potential scale of lost productivity across

some of the UK's most essential sectors.

A study of 1,000 UK frontline workers aged 18+, across energy, logistics, manufacturing, retail, construction and transportation found that workers affected by tablet or touchscreen fragilities lose almost two working hours* each week. Assuming 50 working weeks per year, this amounts to an estimated 92 hours every year* across these industries.

A failing tablet might seem like a small problem, but for frontline businesses, the cost can quickly add up. Lost working hours, delayed jobs, and disrupted operations all put pressure on productivity and profitability. And when those failures happen in industries like retail and energy, the consequences can extend beyond the business to the people relying on its services every day.

Frontline technology faces a gathering storm

Frontline technology is already being pushed to its limits, but frontline workers surveyed fear tougher conditions are yet to come. Nearly two-thirds (64%[1]) worry that more frequent or extreme weather could make it harder for them to do their job effectively in the future, rising to more than three-quarters in construction (77%[1]) and in energy (76%[1]).

From exposed construction sites and energy infrastructure to busy factory floors and warehouses, frontline technology must perform in demanding conditions. Nobody notices when technology works. Everyone notices when it doesn't. And with just over four in five frontline workers surveyed (81%[2]) agreeing that even a small technology problem can have a significant impact on their working day, the consequences go far beyond a broken screen – it's a job left unfinished, a customer kept waiting, or an operation disrupted.

Demanding conditions, far-reaching consequences

From long shifts and tight deadlines to extreme temperatures, dust and rain, frontline technology must withstand conditions that go far beyond the typical workplace. More than half of frontline workers surveyed regularly face long shifts (59%) or work on the move (57%) or require extended battery life (52%).

These conditions can expose the limitations of everyday technology. In the past year, 44% have experienced batteries running out, 32% have struggled to use device screens while wearing gloves, and 28% have encountered difficulties using screens in the rain.

When devices fail, the consequences extend beyond the worker. Among respondents whose tablet or touchscreen device had failed or malfunctioned, almost half (44%) reported delays completing tasks in the past 12 months, while nearly a third (31%) have been prevented from finishing a task altogether. These disruptions don't stop with the individual worker. Among the same group of respondents, 41% reported an impact on customers or members of the public, and 34% reported an impact on production or operations.

For organisations, the message is clear: frontline technology must do more than survive demanding conditions. It needs to perform reliably throughout the working day, helping

employees stay productive and keeping wider operations moving.

Rugged on paper. But ready for the real world?

With frontline workers relying on technology in some of Britain's most demanding working environments, the question is whether the devices designed to support them are truly up to the job.

Two-thirds (66%[2]) of frontline workers surveyed say they have previously used technology described as durable or rugged that struggled with the realities of their job. Meanwhile, 78%[2] agree that technology which appears suitable 'on paper' does not always perform as expected in real frontline environments.

For frontline workers surveyed, the ultimate test is how technology performs in the environments where it's needed most. More than four in five (82%[2]) agree that a device's suitability for frontline work can only truly be judged in real working conditions.

And who better to make that judgement than the people using the technology every day? Four in five (80%[2]) believe frontline workers should have more input into technology their organisation chooses, reinforcing the importance of considering frontline workers' experiences when purchasing devices.

Lenovo takes rugged testing to new heights

With frontline workers surveyed calling for technology that can stand up to the realities of their jobs, Lenovo is taking real-world testing to new heights – literally.

The 'Mountain Review' campaign, placed Lenovo's ThinkTab X11 Rugged Tablet to the top of Ben Nevis, Britain's highest mountain, exposing it to some of the country's harshest and most unpredictable weather conditions for 30 straight days and nights.*

Standing at 1,345 metres above sea level, Ben Nevis presents a formidable challenge, with the tablet facing wind, rain, snow, freezing temperatures, and rapidly changing weather conditions. Rather than relying solely on controlled laboratory demonstrations, Lenovo is letting the mountain put its rugged technology to the test.

The challenge documented the tablet's experience throughout the 30-day period, with periodic functionality and battery checks and a final assessment of its performance.

The idea is simple: if rugged technology is built to withstand demanding environments, what better place to put it to the test than the highest mountain in Britain? Rather than simply making claims about durability, Lenovo wants to let real-world conditions speak for themselves.

Ashley Rolfe, Chief Technologist at Lenovo UK&I, said:

"Technology is the backbone of frontline operations, and when it fails, the consequences

extend far beyond a broken device, disrupting productivity, delaying customers and adding pressure to workers.

“Our research shows that even supposedly rugged devices don’t always live up to expectations, highlighting the need for technology that’s proven in the toughest real-world conditions, not just in a laboratory.

“That’s why we took our ThinkTab X11 Rugged Tablet to Britain’s highest mountain for the Mountain Review, putting its durability to the test in some of the country’s toughest conditions. Because ultimately, the best technology is the technology you don’t have to think about – it simply works, letting people get on with the job.”

*Please note the conditions of this test were more extreme than those covered by the product’s IP68 rating. Results reflect performance under the specific test conditions and do not guarantee durability in all environments or circumstances.

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About the Research

The research was conducted by Censuswide, among a sample of 1,000 UK frontline workers (18+) in energy, logistics, manufacturing, retail, construction, and transportation, who use a touchscreen device as part of their role. Findings cover attitudes towards workplace technology, device reliability, working conditions, operational disruption, and technology purchasing decisions. The data was collected between 21st–28th October 2026.

*the statistic ‘2 hours a week’ is rounded up from 1.84 hours on average. The following data points are calculated based on the 1.84 hours average being multiplied by 50 weeks.

- 92 hours every year
- More than two 40-hour working weeks every year

About the Lenovo ThinkTab X11 Rugged Tablet

Engineered for tough frontline shifts, the ThinkTab X11 is the first Android-powered rugged tablet under the Think brand. Built to withstand drops, dust, and downpours, it’s backed by MIL-STD-810H certification (with protective case) and IP68 rating. Powered by Snapdragon®, it delivers PC-level visibility and responsiveness – even in extreme weather or direct sunlight.

You can find further information about the ThinkTab X11 here.

About Lenovo

Lenovo is a US$83 billion revenue global technology powerhouse, ranked #153 in the Fortune Global 500, and serving millions of customers every day in 180 markets. Guided by its vision of “Smarter Technology for All”, Lenovo is executing a Hybrid AI strategy that spans Personal AI – one personal AI, multiple devices; and Enterprise AI – helping customers turn data into

insights and value. This strategy is delivered through the Group's commitment to world-class innovation and a full-stack AI portfolio, including devices, infrastructure solutions, software, solutions, and services. Lenovo is listed on the Hong Kong stock exchange under Lenovo Group Limited (HKSE: 992) (ADR: LNVGY). Learn more at www.lenovo.com and follow the latest news in our newsroom.

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[1] 'Very concerned' and 'Somewhat concerned' options combined

[2] 'Strongly agree' and 'Somewhat agree' options combined