

- **Consider Long Term Contracts Carefully!** Some long term contracts may offer lower rates, but lock you into a plan that may be inappropriate for you in the future; or you may discover that you're unhappy with the services provided.

Termination Fees: A common complaint with long term contracts involves the sometimes hefty price for cancellation. Some contracts charge hundreds of dollars. If you are unsure exactly what plan best fits your calling habits, and want to avoid paying a large termination fee, it might be best to avoid an extended contract, for example a contract that ties you to a service plan for two years.

Inquire About “Dead Zones.” All services have gaps in their coverage areas. This means that calls may be “dropped” or service may be unavailable in areas between service towers. Be sure to ask your wireless provider about those areas.

Remember, carefully read and understand all terms of a wireless service contract before signing it!

For more information about this issue contact the Attorney General’s Office at (800) 771-7755 or visit our web site at www.ag.ny.gov.

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ATTORNEY GENERAL ERIC T. SCHNEIDERMAN

CONSUMER TIPS



WIRELESS PHONES



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Dear New Yorker:

More consumers than ever are buying wireless phones for business and personal use. With the increased competition between telecommunications companies throughout the State, wireless phones have become much less expensive and much more accessible.

Although many consumers are content with their wireless phones and service contracts, my office has received an increasing number of phone inquiries and complaints on the subject. Oftentimes, the complaints involve misunderstandings regarding calling areas and billing practices or complaints about disconnections or poor quality service.

It is very important that consumers carefully read and fully understand their contracts for the wireless phone service. Although the advertisements by some companies emphasize “free” items or services or advantageous rates for usage, some consumers have later discovered that the claims were not quite what they seemed. Usage rates are sometimes more complicated than advertisements reflect and service problems, such as “dead zones” and

repetitive busy signals due to system overload, have led some consumers to reconsider their provider choice.

By the time of this discovery, however, a consumer probably has signed a long-term contract that includes a substantial cancellation fee.

My office has developed the following tips to help guide consumers interested in wireless phone services in making better decisions. The most important recommendation is to first consider your calling needs and habits in order to find an appropriate plan. If you are unsure, it might be advantageous to find a month-to-month service or a short-term contract. Also, it is very important to compare different plans and different companies.

If you are having difficulty with your wireless service plan, please feel free to contact my consumer help line at (800) 771-7755.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Schneiderman".

ERIC T. SCHNEIDERMAN

Not All Plans Are Created Equal: Carefully evaluate your personal phone calling habits prior to shopping for a wireless phone deal. It is important to estimate how many minutes per month you intend to use your wireless telephone.

Examine Each Plan’s “Home Calling Area”: Wireless home areas do not necessarily mirror local service plans for regular landline phones.

Talking Too Much? Make sure to inquire into charges and fees for additional minutes beyond the number included in your plan.

Calling Outside Your Home Calling Area: Be sure to inquire what a plan charges for minutes dialed outside the local service area.

800 Numbers and Directory Assistance Calls: Ask about charges for dialing 800 numbers and directory assistance. Generally, they are charged as calls made outside your “home calling area,” which may result in additional expenses to you.

Calls Received Add Up! Most wireless phone companies currently charge for both making and receiving calls. You won’t save your “free air time” by having people call you.

Watch Those Fees! Inquire into all fees associated with a service plan. Some plans contain charges for “air time, roaming, and universal service funds.” And remember, there are taxes associated with wireless services.