

CUB outlines cell phone cost savings tips

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If you think you're spending too much for your cell phone, there's a new tool to help you figure out how to cut costs, thanks to the Citizens Utility Board.

At a Rock Island press conference Tuesday, the nonprofit Chicago-based citizen's watchdog group said a study of about 7,000 cell phone bills showed that people can cut wireless costs an average of \$331 a year.

The bills were analyzed using Cellphone Saver at www.CUBCellphoneSaver.com, CUB's free online tool. The site allows people to upload a copy of an online wireless bill, then gives a detailed analysis of how the bill can be cut.

CUB spokesman Patrick Deignan said cell-phone companies aren't regulated, so CUB's Web site can provide "more transparency" within cell-phone companies. "It's frustrating to have a \$39.95 plan and you end up paying \$45 or \$50 a month," he said.

The study showed that people often pay for many more text messages and minutes than they need, and a "majority of bills averaged more than seven hours of wasted" calling time a month, Deignan said.

Nearly half the bills analyzed showed an average of \$10.64 a month in potentially useless extras, such as 411 charges, roadside assistance and handset insurance, he said.

Deignan suggested using free 411 services such as 1-800-FREE-411, and opting out of handset insurance.

People using AT&T, Verizon, U.S. Cellular, T-Mobile and Sprint are eligible to use the free online tool. For more information, visit www.citizensutilityboard.org/cellphonesaver.html.



Photo: Laura Anderson
Citizens Utility Board spokesman Patrick Deignan Tuesday discussed the findings of a cellphone bill study that discovered people can save an average of \$331 per year.