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Wednesday, August 04, 2010

Calling Mexico: Avoid rip-offs

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Cost of five 20-minute calls

Card	Where buy/ Get Info	Rate/min Range	Rate/ min to Cell	Fees	Minimum Purchase	Estimated total monthly cost of five 20-minute calls to each city				
						Mexico City	Guadalajara	Monterrey	Other Cities	Small towns
Car-Tel	Local Stores	0.7¢-9¢	16¢	None	\$2	70¢	70¢	70¢	\$2	\$9
US Cuauhtemina	Union telecard alliance (uniontelecard.com)	3.2¢-9.7¢	17.1¢	None	\$5	\$3.20	\$3.20	\$3.20	\$3.90	\$9.70
Boss Revolution or Talk Revolt	BossRevolution.com, TalkRevolt.com, Local Stores	3.4¢-8.25¢	12.6¢	None	\$5 online, \$1 in stores	\$3.40	\$3.40	\$3.40	\$3.87	\$8.25
Emerald Plan	EnjoyPrepaid.com	3.5¢-5¢	14¢	None, but see next column	\$20 (\$2 fee for orders under \$40)	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$5	\$5
1 Second Mexico City (Note: For calls to landlines.)	NobelCom.com	3.5¢	X	None	\$20 (\$2 fee for orders under \$40)	\$3.50	X	X	X	X
Talk International	Local Stores	2.5¢-6.5¢	11.5¢	69¢ 2nd day and then every 14 days	\$2	\$3.88	\$3.88	\$3.88	\$4.30	\$7.88
Ninel Conde	SpeedyPin.com	0.6¢-5¢	8.3¢	69¢ weekly fee, "carrier service fee" up to 20%, see next column	\$3 (must buy at least 5 cards, \$1 fee for orders under \$20)	\$4.03	\$4.03	\$4.03	\$4.75 (Tijuana)	\$9.31
La Leyenda	Union telecard alliance (uniontelecard.com)	2.7¢-8.2¢	14¢	79¢ 2nd day and then every 14 days	\$5	\$4.28	\$4.28	\$4.28	\$4.98	\$9.78
ZapTel Study Abroad	ZapTel.com	4.4¢-9.8¢	20.5¢	None, but see next column	\$5 (\$1 service fee for the \$5 card)	\$4.80	\$4.80	\$4.40	\$5.80	\$9.80
Clear Connections	SpeedyPin.com	5¢-8.1¢	12.6¢	None, but see next column	\$2 (\$1 handling fee for orders under \$20)	\$5	\$5.10	\$5.10	\$5.20- \$5.80	\$8.10
PennyTalk	PennyTalk.com	2¢	16¢	49¢ connection, 99¢ monthly	\$25	\$5.44	\$5.44	\$5.44	\$5.44	\$5.44

*Prices as of July 2010

Prepaid calling chart, courtesy of the Citizens Utility Board

By Tribune Reporter Julie Wernau | The Citizens Utility Board has created an online chart that lays out the customers making calls to Mexico after an analysis by the nonprofit utility watchdog organization found that service littered with fees and confusing rates that can jump as high as 1,000 percent depending on the city being called.

The study looked at two kinds of prepaid calling offers: prepaid calling cards purchased in stores that offer a set amount of calling minutes over the Internet that allow consumers to set up an account and transfer money into to buy calling minutes. The study found that prepaid calling cards can cause a caller's costs to go up, including tacked on connection and maintenance fees, higher rates for calls to cell phone numbers and cards that expire or can't be recharged.

Despite the setbacks, CUB said calling-cards and other prepaid calling plans can still beat out other options, like landline distance plans. The online chart is available here.

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Posted at 02:33:29 PM in Cell phones, Consumer news & tips

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