

Local 

Consumers paying too much for cell phones?

Monday, October 11, 2010

TAGS: [local](#), [sarah schulte](#)[Comment Now](#) [Email](#) [Print](#) [Report a typo](#)

October 11, 2010 (CHICAGO) (WLS) -- Are you paying too much on your cell phone bill? A new report from the Citizens Utility Board says yes. It claims, on average, consumers are overpaying by \$359 a year.

According to CUB, much of that money is being lost paying for unused minutes and unnecessary services. But what can you do to save some money?

Read your monthly bill very carefully to see if there are any charges that you don't recognize. The Citizens Utility Board says billing errors, unnecessary services and wasted minutes are what CUB is calling the most dangerous pitfalls in the wireless market.

Just about everyone now owns one: cell phones are commonplace and, according to the Citizens Utility Board, known as CUB, so is overpaying. The watchdog organization says Illinois consumers are being gouged an average of \$359 a year. This is based on a CUB report that analyzed over 4,400 bills.

"The report found hours of wasted calling time on bills, because the plans the industry peddles don't come anywhere near meeting the needs of the typical caller," said David Kolata, CUB executive director.

CUB found that cell phone users pay for but do not use an average of 6 hours of calls each month.

"I'm not using all my minutes for my phone usage, but because my package is so old, I'm not paying a lot of money for it either," said cell phone user Fran Nord.

But, for consumers who do mind paying for it, specifically cell phone users who use fewer than 300 minutes a month, CUB suggests switching to a prepaid wireless provider.

CUB also says watch out for billing errors.

"Consumers should look out for being charged for night and weekend minutes when in fact those are free in the plan that they're under," said Kolata.

And, CUB says, check your bill for one-time only charges that show up every month, such as downloads for ringtones or wallpaper.

To see if you are paying too much CUB offers a free online service called "cell phone saver". You can use it as long as your service comes from one of the five major carriers, AT&T, Verizon, Sprint, T-Mobile Or U.S. Cellular..

"Upload it to the cell phone saver and within seconds it will give a full analysis of your bill, tell you if there is better plan out there within your company or a better plan within one of the other four companies," said Patrick Deignan, CUB.

CUB says two out of three consumers who used the free service ended up saving money on their monthly cell phone bills.

CUB also says you may want to rethink paying for extra services such as insurance, directory assistance or roadside service.

CTIA Wireless Associates in Washington, D.C., represents cell phone companies. ABC 7 tried to contact the industry for a comment, but has not received a phone call back.

(Copyright ©2010 WLS-TV/DT. All Rights Reserved.)

[Get more Local >](#)TAGS: [local](#), [sarah schulte](#)[Comment Now](#) [Email](#) [Print](#) [Report a typo](#)[Recommend](#)

9 people recommend this.