

Selected Cell Phone Consumer Complaints
MASSPIRG, September 2005
(actual complaints submitted to MASSPIRG via website, and written by consumer)

I changed my service from analog to digital, got a new phone and everything. First, I was supposed to be eligible for a rebate for the phone, but no forms ever came and when I called AT&T they told me to call the manufacturer. I could have stayed more on top of it but it still seemed kind of shady.

Secondly, I didn't realize that I did not have free nights and weekends with this new service, I was paying a few dollars more than before and the description of the service was very similar to what I had. I don't know how I missed that they did not offer free nights and weekends with their \$30 plan. Apparently you have 60 days to notice the problem and adjust your billing accordingly. I called after 70 days so I was out of luck. I pointed out that free nights and weekends are standard at that price point with other providers. My bills for these 2 months together totaled over \$400 and they wouldn't do anything for me. I did wait too long to call but I was still shocked that they would do ANYTHING since I have been a customer for over 6 years.

- Susan, Boston

I have discovered that while they may call themselves "Cingular" they have so many different departments located around the country that there is no understanding of each other and how to interact, and therefore they act as separate companies. This leads to a lack of responsibility taken for problems and who should solve them, since every department seems to think it is a different department's job. Here is a short synopsis of the multitude of problems I have had over the past 5 months:

In September I went on-line to order the LG L1400. It was free at that time. Before I finalized my purchase, I decided to call the customer service to speak to a human being to make sure porting my telephone number would be seamless. After answering my questions she then said she would just do the purchase over the phone and I could get the same deal. So I spent 45 minutes on the phone with her, only at the end to be told, "Oops, it is not free if you do it over the phone, it's going to cost you \$50 dollars". (This continues to show that different departments act like different companies, creating problems for the consumer.) So I would not buy it and went back to do it online. After over an hour of filling out forms online, the computer gave me the response of "We are sorry, we CAN NOT port your number".

WELL, WHY? - Because the customer service woman ported my phone number when she thought she was doing the sale for me over the phone. And although I did not complete the sale, the number had been ported. So I could not get the phone on-line.

So I spent the next 2 days, and over 5 hours, on the phone with Cingular people being transferred from one person to the next, and many different departments, none of which had a clue how to get my phone number back. I was so frustrated that I went to a Cingular store, figuring if I spoke to someone in person they could help me. NO. They have "nothing to do with Cingular on-line or Cingular over the phone service." GREAT. Another hour wasted.

So I got back on the phone, and was transferred and repeated my story to 10 different people, for reasons such as - "Oh you are in Boston, then I have to transfer you to a customer service department in that region, I only deal with Texas." (Well then why did someone transfer me to a Texas person in the first place???) I finally got one person, who figured out he had to send me to the "porting department" to un-port my phone number.

Now you would think some supervisor or customer service would realize this ridiculous hassle I went through, and just take my order at that time over the phone and send me the phone. NO. I would still have to go online and order it. Only by that time, 2 days later, the free phone deal was gone. Great.

So I ordered it online. I bought it for a reduced price with the purchase of the plan. I finally got it. I set it up.

The volume on the phone didn't work. Although the connection is fine the volume is so faint. So I called within my 15-day trial period to speak to Cingular about this. They said they would send me a new model of the same phone, and I was told once I receive the new phone I must immediately return the old phone, otherwise I would be charged for the phone. Three weeks went by; I never received a replacement phone. So back I went onto the phone with Cingular. They didn't know why I didn't receive my FREE replacement phone and they placed another order for one. That NEXT day my credit card (that they must have had on file from my original purchase) was billed \$136.49 for a new phone!

Back onto the phone I went. Why was my credit card billed??? A. The phone is supposed to be a free replacement (I had already paid for the original) B. I haven't even received it yet. C. I did not authorize a charge to go on my credit card.

This was November. Finally in January, Cingular agreed to refund my money, for the complete amount. When I checked my credit card bill they had only refunded me \$31.49. Back on the phone I went. I am still waiting for the extra \$105.00 to be put back on my card. I don't understand why it is so difficult.

I can no longer waste my time with these phone calls. It is not worth the stress and frustration Cingular puts me through. I can take solace in knowing based on their lack of organization I will not recommend them to any friends or family that are looking for new plans. In addition, maybe this consumer input will help Cingular become more aware of, or reiterate, issues that need to be addressed.

My question for Cingular is this - if they already have no organization and communication skills, how much worse will it get now that they have merged with AT&T Wireless and added millions of new customers?

- Kate, Boston

When I signed up with them I had 350 daytime minutes and 1,000 free nights and weekends. One night I had to make a computer help call to an 800 number. I was on the phone with tech support for nearly 2 hours. Imagine my surprise when I was hit with an over \$100 phone bill. When I called to complain I was told I only had those free night and weekend minutes for my first year, which had recently ended. I had no prior knowledge that my terms would be rescinded at that time. Sure enough I looked back at my bills and totally buried on like page 4 or 6 in the TINIEST

font size one could still read was a notification of the cessation of those free minutes. Also when I had started with them they didn't give me a local number, it was considered "roaming" to check my voice mail from my home phone! I had to call them 3 times to get that straightened out and they almost charged me a fee to change the number. Helpful, whispered as she didn't want to "get in trouble," advice from an employee helped me to avoid said fee. Still, I was on the phone for an hour to get it. When I wanted to politely voice a complaint about that with a supervisor the woman would not transfer me. On top of this with AT&T I lost more calls than I kept; of course I was charged for each lost call. I am with Verizon now and even though my year is up I still have my night and weekend minutes and have NEVER lost a call. (Would be nice if they notified me when I was approaching my 350 allowed minutes, though...)

- Juliet, Marstons Mills

Living in Central Square, Cambridge, MA, I purchased a cell phone and plan. I was assured that the thing would have excellent coverage throughout the Boston Area. Five weeks after the purchase, I moved about a mile west, to Harvard Square, and I got no reception in my building and in front of my building. I went back to AT&T; they told me no dice, sorry, you have to pay a \$200 cancellation charge, despite the fact that we made invalid claims about the quality of coverage.

I now have Verizon, which is better, but I'd still like to complain about false advertising. I purchased a nationwide plan, after looking at their coverage map, which shows nationwide coverage, without gaps. Nationwide does not mean nationwide. As soon as I get outside metro Boston, coverage is spotty. Like where I live now, I'm 30 miles south of the city, on the ocean, with no mountains or tall buildings to get in the way, and reception is very poor, bad enough that I needed to get a land line. I have never gotten any kind of coverage north of Augusta, Maine.

It's not nationwide. It's a smattering of coverage in metro areas across the nation.

- Justin, Brant Rock

I signed up with Cingular nearly two-and-a-half years ago. I was comfortable with my plan (despite occasionally going over my minutes); however, I had destroyed my phone by dropping it one too many times and had to buy a new phone. I "qualified" for a free upgrade about a year and a half into my contract and bought a fancy flip phone without having to change my plan. Suddenly, I started getting \$300+ phone bills every month. When I requested a paper statement (I had been doing online bill pay for a while), the statement showed me as making all sorts of calls outside of my calling area. I had also been noticing that my phone displayed the roaming symbol even when I was in my apartment or neighborhood. When I called Cingular to discuss these issues and have my phone bills adjusted, they told me the issue was that they had been bouncing my new phones signals off of older towers and that they had rezoned (or something), explaining why my coverage area was so bizarre. The customer service rep told me that she could identify some false charges, but not necessarily all of those charges for the previous month. When I requested hard copies of my previous 4 bills (as this had been going on unbeknownst to me since I purchased my phone) in order to inspect them myself, they never arrived. Cingular was able (after some time and finagling) to bounce my signals off of the correct towers. I learned right then and there that if I was going to be dealt with fairly and honestly by Cingular, I would have to advocate for myself and

protect my rights as a consumer. Cingular was certainly not looking out for my best interest. Any piece of legislation aimed at protecting consumers from this type of oversight, that spares another individual hundreds of dollars of false charges, would be a godsend.

- Jessica, Brookline

I moved to a new state in 2003 and changed my cell phone number to my new area code but did not cancel my plan or fail to pay or anything like that. Ironically, I went through their automated "Easy Move service" or something like that. Verizon insisted that I had broken my 2-year contract and kept attempting to bill me incredible amounts of money. When the contract truly was up and I was eligible for a new phone under the "new every two" plan, they insisted that the contract had just started in 2003 and I would have to pay for the phone. I got through to some real, live person after hours of trying who assured me after a call to my old state (why don't they have a national database?) that I was eligible for the phone, and I would not be charged but that they needed my credit card number which they WOULD NOT USE. They then proceeded to charge me \$97 on the credit card number which they had promised not to use to cover the cost of the phone that they had assured me would be free. Many phone calls followed and every customer service representative, including people at the manager level, informed me that they could not refund my \$97; I would have to take it in the form of credits on my account over 2.5 months. I informed them that taking someone's money when you are not entitled to it and refusing to give it back is called "stealing" which is illegal in this country. Apparently, our laws do not apply to corporations like Verizon.

- J., Somerville

I have automatic bill pay through Cingular and had no problems until my credit card expired. About 2 months prior to the card expiring, I received a letter from Cingular stating that I needed to update the card number. I called within a week from receiving the letter and got the number and expiration date updated. About a month after my credit card expired my cell phone was shut off. I called Cingular and the customer service rep told me that my new card info had never been changed. So, I gave them all the new credit card numbers and my phone was turned back on later that day.

Another month after this happened, now two months from my credit card expiring, my phone was turned off again. I called Cingular once more and was told that my credit card information was never updated in the two calls that I had already placed. I gave them my information and hoped this would be the last time I would have to do this. It took another phone shut-off and another very long call to Cingular the next month to get the entire thing finally resolved.

At this point I tried to get out of my contract as I was completely fed up with their customer service and the automatic phone shut-offs I had been getting without warning. A customer service manager told me there was nothing that I could do, that I was locked into the contract for another year. And unless I paid over \$300, I could not cancel my contract. I asked him to send me a service agreement stating the things that Cingular is responsible for in our contract. He promised to get it out to me within the week. Almost a year later, I still have not received any letter or agreement from them. I continue to call and no one will send me the information that I want.

I now feel like I am being held hostage by Cingular.

- Jill, Worcester

I had AT&T Wireless as a provider for my first year of cell phone ownership, 2003-2004. The service was terrible. Signal strength was variable, but mostly weak, and telephone hold times with Customer Service were at the very least a half hour. In the fall (after the one-year contract was over) I switched to Verizon Wireless, which turned out to be much better, at least by comparison.

In October, after I terminated the original service, AT&T Wireless sent me a statement with a credit amount of \$13.82. I called them to find out how and when I would be receiving my credit check. They kept me on hold for 45 minutes (after waiting so long, I felt committed to waiting until I got a person on the line). When I finally spoke to someone, they assured me that I would receive a check in the mail.

By December I still had received no check, so I called again, but used the menu to reach a person relatively quickly (I called Sales), and then insisted on minimal wait due to my previous experience. I was very firm. Ultimately I reached someone in "Receivables Management" who gave me all sorts of excuses but said he would do everything he could to have my credit sent to me in the mail.

Within three days, I received a letter from them stating that now there was no credit balance on my account. I called again and was very, very angry (but polite). I was again assured that the representative would do everything he could to secure my check. Five days later, I received another letter. This one stated that the credit was applied to my account in error, and then one week later I received a statement with the credit balanced out to zero.

I know that the actual monetary amount of the credit was small. However, after the poor phone service and infuriating Customer Service experience, I wanted some small satisfaction from the company at least making good on their promise. This did not happen, but AT&T Wireless did demonstrate what a truly miserable business they run. I now tell anyone interested to avoid AT&T Wireless at all costs.

- Michael, Jamaica Plain

I was sold a contract that included 2 phone numbers, 500 free anytime rollover minutes, 300 free anytime minutes, unlimited night and weekends, and I bought, for \$7 a month as it was outlined on my contract, unlimited calling 7am-7pm.

I purchased the contract in December. By March I noticed I was being charged for calls from 7pm to 7 am. I called to have this corrected; they told me my contract wasn't valid, that they had no plan like that. I had a contract to prove that was the plan I purchased and spent hours on the phone with service reps, faxed bills, copies of my contract to 6 different service reps over the course of 4 months before I finally got all of the charges removed, but I still ended up having to pay \$14 a month for 7pm-7am calling though my contract clearly said \$7. I only got it resolved because I finally screamed and said I was going to get another cell company. I felt like an idiot for staying through all of that - but each time they assured me they would take care of it. Once when I called to see why they did not change my bill they told me my request for reimbursement was denied! They were rude and ineffective. They had HORRIBLE customer service attitude and approach - If I weren't so busy with more important things and didn't hate shopping so much I might have switched long ago - I feel like a chump.

- Susan, Maynard

I've dealt with my cell company many times. We've argued about roaming charges and lack of dropped call credits and hidden contract extensions, but the worst was an argument that went on for 5 months. I ended up going to the better business bureau and that pressure caused my cell company to relent and given me the credit I deserved. All I wanted to do was buy a new phone, but the company opened a new account. For one month I was double billed. I tried many times in different ways to prove my point. Finally after showing my credit card statements to an employee, she granted my position and said she'd help. She called some office and the guy on the phone said he'd give me the credit. I thought I had won, but my next statement showed the credit and then the money charged back to my account. Furious, I called and the rep only said the charges were legit and I had to pay. I had been lied to and I had no recourse with the company. I told my story over and over and no one would do a thing. After the complaint was processed at the BBB my cell company called me up and removed the charges and the late fees. It's a contract with the devil to have a cell phone. They don't care about the customer and they try to extract as much money from people as possible in a manner devoid of integrity.

- Gabe, Newton

When we got the phone we were told we had "nationwide roaming". At the last moment they did show us a map so we'd know that there were some areas that weren't covered, but we were left with the impression that they were obscure, no place we'd be likely to use a phone. The map is impossible to decipher. When we got our bills we were shocked - we'd been charged for calls we made from NY City, Austin, Chicago and other major cities. In fact, it seems that we've never yet found a spot away from home where we aren't charged, and charged at a ridiculously high rate, for roaming. And of course we're stuck with a two-year contract.

- Donna, Cambridge

My wife entered a contract with Cingular a number of years ago and signed a form stating that she would hold to the contract for a minimum of 1 year. Over two years later her office offered her a cell phone and she asked if I wanted to take over her number, which I did. Since we lived together there was no reason to change the name on the bill. My own office offered to help with the cost since I used the phone often for business. They asked if I could change the name on the bill to my own in order to make accounting easier. I contacted Cingular and asked if this was possible. They said sure, no need to even write up a new contract we'll send you some forms to fill out. I kept the same phone number; bills came to the same address, everything just fine. I used the phone for about 9 months but started to experience dropped calls, disrupted service, mischarges and complained. After a period of this my office even got fed up and offered me a phone through their plan. When I tried to drop the phone service with Cingular they charged over \$195 as an "early termination fee" even though we had used the phone (with the same number and billing address) for over three years. Remember, the original contract called for a minimum contract period of 1 year. We wrangled on the phone for months until I finally told them I was not going to pay any service charges, any interest on such charges, and that they could send all the bills and threatening letters they wanted. They threatened me with a collection service, to which I told the same story over and over and over for months until they must have been convinced I meant what I said.

- Gregory, Essex

I am an 82-year-old lady who has subscribed to Cingular One for about three years now and paid a monthly fee of some odd twenty plus dollars per month. I acquired this cell phone because I live alone and my children felt it would be wise for me to be able to call if I had an emergency. I renewed my commitment to use Cingular last July for another year. Shortly after I renewed my subscription I had trouble with my cell phone. I went to have it looked at a Mall nearby in Dartmouth, MA where I purchased the cell phone and signed up for another year. The young woman who works for Cingular took the phone and sent it to be fixed. It came back with a strange looking cover. Never mind, I thought, this is not important. Shortly after this event I spent the summer without problems because I never tried to use the phone, had no emergency. During the fall I tried to use the phone once and could not get through. I called Cingular who gave me a small discount on my bill, because I told them I was unable to use the phone. Fine, I thought. This past weekend, in the middle of a snowstorm I got stuck on the icy road. It was mighty cold out, and I was on my way home late from a weekend away from home. It was snowing. I tried to call for help on my phone, and received a message that I was NOT a registered customer. Not a member. What nerve, I thought! I have paid Cingular every month regularly my twenty plus dollars. A friend tried to make a call after I returned home frozen to death. He too received this mysterious message as he listened to the message on my phone. He then told me to call Cingular and complain. I did today. I spent at least thirty minutes arguing my case with a man called Christian. I told him how I had been unable to use my phone, how I had extended my commitment in July for another year, but I felt the company had done me wrong by sending a message that was incorrect. I HAD been paying my bills after all! Christian would not hear a thing. He politely said I could stop having Cingular if I so wished, but that I would have to pay them \$150.00 because I had vouched to keep being a member of Cingular. I responded I would indeed have remained, but now I felt the company had let me down and I did no longer want to use Cingular. I demanded a refund for the month, and also said that I should not pay the \$150.00 at all. "I am going to stop your service," Christian said, "but you will get a bill for \$150.00 on your last statement." I asked to speak to his superior. I pleaded my case with the superior and had exactly the same answers once again. I was on the phone for about an hour. I finally lost my temper and hung up exhausted. Before hanging up, however, I asked, "Would you deal with your mother the way you are dealing with me, Would you ask her to pay this \$150.00 when you know that she could have risked her life driving alone in a snow storm on an icy road, after she tried to call for help and could not do so!" There was a silence after I mentioned "Mother." But again the superior's voice said, "You are going to get this bill, and we will terminate your service." What service, I would like to know?

- Ludmila, Westport Point

I recently bought my first cell phone, a Nokia from Cingular. They advertised that the phone was free and that monthly basic service was only 29.99. When I called and ordered the phone, they did tell me that there was a one-time activation fee of \$36. And when the phone and my calling plan arrived, the plan stated that my first bill would be \$79.73, which included \$21.99 for a case. However, when the first bill arrived it was for \$101.84!! In small print above there was a notation that there might be a 'prorated charge'. And there was a comment describing the bill saying it might be bigger than I had expected!! And when I complained that the total sum was quite different from what they had said the first bill would be, I was told that what they wrote in my plan booklet was 'just an estimate' Well, it may be

difficult to accuse them of lying, but their advertising and their tactics are quite deceptive!!! I was told nothing either over the phone or in my plan booklet about there being a prorated charge.

Furthermore, the case they sent me is too small, does not fit the cell phone, but since it had been more than 30 days, they would not give a refund nor a new case. I guess that is my fault, but it is lousy to get a case that doesn't fit!!

- Suzanne, Cambridge

We responded to a promotion by this company. Over the phone, we ordered a 2-year contract for cell phone service. They charged us \$100.00 for the phone because we were signing up for 2 years.

We received the phone in the mail. When we got our first bill, Verizon Wireless charged us \$250.00 for the phone.

We called them and they said we would not get the phone for \$100.00 because we did not send in the postcard stating that we were on a 2-year plan.

What postcard? No one told us anything about a postcard!! After a lot of yelling on our part, they agreed to send us the postcard. They did and we signed it and sent it back and got our phone for \$100.00.

This postcard business is ridiculous!! We would never treat one of our customers this way in our business here. Verizon should send an email or letter or fax to customers detailing what they have ordered on the phone.

- Tai and Michael, Acton

We had a family plan and when one of the phones broke, I had to pay to replace it and unknowingly, the salesperson also had me extend my service for 2 years. I thought that it just said that I had a 2-year plan. I did not realize that it was an extension. When I went to change providers, I then had to pay an early termination fee. I don't see why getting a new phone, especially one that I paid for should require an extension of the contract. I feel that I was conned.

- Barbara, Bridgewater

After a year's worth of spotty service and strange billing issues, I decided to change carriers to Verizon (which has been great, overall). Long story short, my 1-year contract ended on Dec 20th, I switched service on Dec 21st and now I find out that they charged me a \$175 termination fee on the two lines I had! I called back as soon as I found out and spoke with a Rep, informing him that I looked into this specifically before changing service. After a 15-minute wait, he came back on the line and agreed that it was a billing error. I was issued over to the billing department's line, where I waited for 30 minutes before hanging up in frustration. To date I still haven't been able to resolve this issue.

- Sean, Medford

When I first signed up for Verizon, the phones were to be used by my two kids for their use at the colleges they were attending. Their phone service was not problematic until my daughter graduated and moved back home around the same time that my son transferred to another college in western Massachusetts. After trying to figure out if the phones were malfunctioning, we realized that my son was unable to get service in his new area and my daughter was unable to get service at just about every area of our neighborhood. Therefore, I canceled our Verizon service and refused to pay the \$350.00 penalty that Verizon was requesting for terminating our contract. Eventually, we settled with Verizon and sent a payment of \$150.00. No cell phone company should be permitted to demand a termination fee from a customer who is not receiving satisfactory service. Our situation changed from the initial time of signing up. We had no idea that we'd be unable to get service in the neighborhood of the densely populated city where my family resides. The termination fee required by cell phone companies should be abolished. I hope that your organization can help consumers on this issue.

- Marcia, Waban

When I changed residence to coastal Massachusetts in August, my cell phone no longer got reception in my new house. But since I had signed a renewal contract a year ago I have to wait until July to cancel my plan or face nearly \$150 in charges--just to cancel my plan early! So, I am stuck with a phone that gets no reception and a plan with more minutes than I now need since I can't use my phone at home. The inflexibility and surcharges associated with changing plans or phones is ridiculous!

- Erica, Gloucester

Oh god. It's WAY too long to get into, but basically I ordered two phones with Sprint, one with PCS Vision services (mobile internet) and one without.

First they screwed up which phone should have which phone number (we migrated our numbers from Cingular).

Then they screwed up which one the Vision usage was getting charged to, so all the internet usage looked like it was on the phone WITHOUT the vision internet plan. We were racking up charges of up to \$800 (!) that were erroneous, and Sprint kept cutting off phone service to both phones because of the huge erroneous charges.

I've gone through a couple dozen calls and probably spent AT LEAST 10 hours on the phone with them, and I'm still not sure if it's fixed. I had folks hang up on me, and I even heard one customer service rep mocking my erroneous charges to a co-worker.

There's quite a bit more... It is a nightmare, and I'm locked in for two years.

- Daniel, Lynn

Part of my contract includes 1000 "in-network" minutes. For the first year that I was under contract I did not receive those credits. When I finally realized this was happening I called them to let them know. They were only willing to refund the mistakes made for the past three months, not for the whole year.

With Verizon you only get an itemized (call by call) bill if you request it after you receive your regular bill. This makes it challenging to catch on to problems like this.

- Rachel, Wellfleet

In October, I switched from Nextel to Cingular. We needed better reception and I hoped for a plan that better matched our needs.

I spent a long time on the phone with the sales rep, comparing features and pricing.

I have three phones in the family talk nationwide plan with 850 rollover minutes. This is nominally about \$80/month plus taxes (another \$15 or so).

So I'm expecting about \$90/month. Today I checked the Cingular website to find out about my current billing. It is \$301. (Actually, the detail shown for the online bill is wrong; only the total is correct.)

From talking with a customer service rep, the billing includes charges to activate two of the lines (the users of those lines were slow to migrate over to Cingular from Nextel), a total of about \$45. I guess I should have expected this. There were also roaming charges for calls made and received in Canada, 64 minutes at \$0.80 per minute. The per-minute charge was a shock. Who knew Canada was so foreign. Doing the math shows about \$52 plus taxes for that.

These two unanticipated charges bring the part of the bill that I understand up to about \$190. I will have to wait until I receive the paper bill to find out what the other \$110 in charges is for.

I am shocked at how their advertised come-on of \$59.99 a month plus \$9.99 a line can turn into \$300 so quickly.

It is astonishing that we consumers are putting up with this: buying products we don't understand, using them the best we can guess at (no decent information about how the services match the actual phone) and paying for service aspects that we don't know we're using.

Now that I understand how the charges work, I wish that I not bought Cingular service. They snare you into a two-year contract that you can't get out of without a very large monetary penalty. Sure, they give you 15 to 30 days to cancel the service. What a joke. You don't find out what your actual charges are going to be until about three months after you start using the plan.

This is nuts.

- Jan, Cambridge

When I moved to Boston I signed up for a cell phone because I needed to make lots of daytime calls. TMobile had a reasonable plan with "anytime minutes".

A couple of years later, my situation changed and I realized that I very infrequently made enough daytime calls to warrant this plan, so I switched to a cheaper plan which was nationwide with free nights and weekends. Not long after that I realized I needed to get my old plan back because I began working from home more and more frequently.

Here is where the horror story begins. First I am told the plan is no longer available. That is understandable, but unfortunately, I had just renewed my contract in order to get a free cell phone. The cheapest plan with a fixed (but not enough) amount of daytime minutes was extremely high, \$80 per month. I signed up for it, because it was still cheaper than paying for a cell phone AND a landline (my housemates were not interested in sharing one). Stuck in my contract, I ended up paying a \$300 bill because I had no way of making my necessary daytime calls.

Luckily (no thanks to TMobile) two things changed. One factor was that my girlfriend and I found a place together, and we now share a landline. This allowed me the possibility of ending my cell phone service. The barrier was that I was locked into a contract. Using the online community craigslist.org I was able to find someone to sign my contract over to. The advantage to the signee is that they avoid paying starting fees when they take on an existing account into their custody. Also the phone was free for them because I simply gave them my old phone.

In this nightmarish experience the worst I have to say about the company is their maze of plans becoming available and unavailable while they lock customers in using contracts. Second most in priority of complaints is that the fact that cell phones charging you for the receipt of calls introduces a double-thievery on the part of these companies. I also found that their call centers were understaffed and I often found myself waiting for as long as 15 minutes on hold when calling customer care.

The best I can say is that the source of my knowledge about how it is possible to sign off a contract was a customer service representative working for customer care. They told me how, when I asked, to get out of my contract and end my service.

- Robert, Brighton

They are no longer my provider due to their terrible handling of some overcharges a year and a half ago. I was in NH. The phone didn't indicate that I was out of home range, so I made some calls. They were billed at roaming rates. I called to protest, and after a few tries and a lot of hold time the agent told me the overcharges would be taken off the bill. They were not, and I was also charged late fees. I wrote a note telling them I wouldn't pay, and couldn't get through. Then the collection company started harassing me and threatening to ruin my credit rating (which is very good, so I wasn't worried). They actually told me the customer service people lie about removing charges! I stopped answering the phone after threatening to call the local investigative reporter and the BBB (which I admit I never did). I didn't pay and they stopped bothering me. I haven't seen whether they actually reported me to the credit bureau or not. I switched to Verizon. They are much better.

- Claire, Dover

Tell us your story: I have had Verizon for several years; when I first signed up I got a flip phone. Well, the second day of having it I dropped it while mowing the lawn. I had a service contract, which they later informed me was only good if the phone could be repaired, and you can imagine the damage the lawn mower did. So, I accepted their reasoning, and purchased another phone from them, for 279 dollars, but they would not issue me the same phone number, and again I didn't care because the phone was only a day old and I had not given out the number to that many people. I did however ask if they were going to charge me a disconnect fee for the old number and they assured me they would NOT. A month later I get a bill for 175 dollar disconnect fee on the first phone. I call and explain my story and they tell me sorry if you got misinformation from our customer service department but I have to pay the fee. I refused and sent them a letter etc. A few months later a collection agency is after me. I explain once again my story; he tells me don't worry I won't bother you any more and gives me a telephone number for a Verizon person that he says will help me. They again say sorry, keep in mind now that I still have Verizon service on my new phone as well as my home phone, and I paid at the time hundreds of dollars a month for phone service. I tell them sorry but I m not paying. Then they hit my credit history with the major credit companies as delinquent. A year later a different collection company is calling me so I again explain my story, and they don't understand why. I still have Verizon and haven't heard from them in a few months, but there is still a bad mark on my credit history because of them, an otherwise perfect credit history. I am waiting until my contract is up with them, and then I will leave them both cell and home.

- Tom, Barnstable

As a matter of fact I am experiencing difficulty with my cell phone co. I bought 4 identical phones from the Cingular store in the Kingston Mall in Nov. each one had a \$50 rebate. Presently, I have received only \$50.

- Liz, MA Resident

I have had problems with fees on multiple occasions. As you know, Verizon has several "package deals" where you get discounts for using more than one of their services. When I switched to Verizon long distance, I was supposed to get \$5.00 off my bill every month (for having both cell phone, local and long distance services). When I called to switch I discussed this with them and I assumed it would happen automatically. I started getting one VERY complicated bill for all my phone services. I eventually realized that I was not getting the appropriate discount. I called them and they made it sound as if it was my responsibility to call the cell phone part of the company (even though I had called the land-line part of the company to make the switch) to make sure the head knew what the tail was doing. I had to fight with them and threaten a lawsuit, to get refunded retroactively for the billing mistake. I have had I think 3 other issues with bills from Verizon. When I added a second phone to my cell phone service, at some point they charged me for a service (voicemail) on the second phone that I had thought was included for free (that is what the sales person had led me to believe). I never followed up on this, but a couple of months later, the fee disappeared! Then a few months later I noticed a fee for text messaging on the second cell phone appeared on the bill. I know that I had never requested this service, and we had never used the service. When I checked past bills, I realized that the fee had been there for a few months before I had realized it. Again, I called them and asked about it. They could give me no answer as to how the fee got there. They were very difficult

about the whole thing, and in order to get refunded for their incorrect charges I had to resort to threatening a lawsuit. I believe there was one other earlier episode when they mischarged me for a service I had not requested, but I don't remember the specifics. What I do know is that this is a recurring theme, and that each time I called to question the mistake in billing the initial response I got from Verizon was that it was not their error, and that there was nothing they could do about refunding any money. Each time, when I eventually got angry and told them their billing practices were the stuff that makes class action lawsuits happen, they immediately agreed to refund at least some of my money. I think they purposely make their phone bills so complicated, hoping that people won't notice these repeated billing errors!!! I'm sure there are never errors in favor of the consumer! Unfortunately for me, in the area that I live, the other cellular carriers do not have good coverage, so switching services is not a good option.

- Lenore, Brookline

More than anything, what aggravates me most is cell phone spam. These are usually text messages that interrupt me by ringing the phone but have no useful purpose. I have more than once been spammed by AT & T urging me to use text messaging or advertising some special rate. Talk about abusing their position as my carrier! I have also received voice spam from marketers. I have no idea how they got my number.

- Tom, Jamaica Plain

I was trying to take over the payments on my cell phone service that my grandpa had been paying for me. It took us 3 weeks and a trip down to the headquarters to get it taken care of... AND of course I had to sign a contract extension. They are still harassing him for an outstanding balance of \$.08!!!

- Chris, Allston

I was switching from Nextel to TMobile after the "take your number with you" law passed. It took about 15 calls to Nextel to "get it done". They said they had put 2 number guards on my phone line for me, without asking me or telling me and then said they did it as a free service to protect me! I guess to protect me from leaving them and signing up with 1 of their competitors.

Anyway, it took many phone calls to fix this; I kept getting the run around. I was told I would have to write a letter by 2 people, and then I was told I would have to sign up for a 1 year contract first before I could take my number. (I was already out of contract before I tried to switch carriers) One guy told me it just couldn't be done. Then, on my last call to Nextel (Every time I called them I had to start with the first level of customer service and then get escalated up to managers and other special departments) I called them, a girl answered, I began to tell her the problem like I did every time I called, and she said "no problem." She did whatever she did on her computer and in 5 minutes my number was free and later that day TMobile called me to tell me they had got the number setup for me. All that runaround and a first level customer service person fixed it for me in 2 minutes.

Also, I must say so far T mobile customer service has been amazing, absolutely the best. Hold time is seconds, and no matter what my problem the person who answers the phone fixes it, no transfers to other

departments. However T mobile network service STINKS outside the city, but the price is the best, and the customer service is the best, so I'll stay with them for a little longer. (Sometimes I like not being able to answer my phone or call people)

- Rich, East Bridgewater

At the time it was Bell Atlantic, who is now Verizon.

Apparently, Bell Atlantic thought I should be held responsible to a plan sold by someone other than it but did not feel that they had to live up to their end. Short version, the person who enrolled me in the plan told me things about the plan that were not apparently true. When confronted, Bell Atlantic said it was between the person who enrolled me in the plan and me. I said fine, but I was not paying for a plan I did not enroll in. They said, that will be \$ 300 to get out of your plan early. I said, how could you hold me responsible for a plan for which you will not be held responsible? Bill collectors seeking to make me pay have now increased that fee to close to \$ 500. How do I get bill collectors to bother them? They have sullied my credit, overcharged me in the first place, and now they want me to pay them to leave me alone. Good luck (Bell Atlantic, Verizon, or whoever you may be next), because I am not paying.

- Seth, Brookline

I was living in Portland, Oregon at the time of my cell phone problem (November 2004). I was getting ready to move back to Massachusetts, so I was using a lot of minutes on my phone calling long distance. I called up Verizon to add 100 more minutes to my plan for that month so I would only pay \$10 extra instead of being charged \$.45 per minute for overage.

I paid off my November bill, but on my next bill there were more charges for November. I was charged around \$16 extra for going over about 37 minutes, even though I'd already paid off that month's bill. Turns out that those 37 minutes were "delayed usage" minutes; minutes that were from the towers of other cell phone providers who didn't report its usage immediately to my provider.

The first time I called Verizon to complain about this, the customer service representative (CSR) was not helpful at all. Even though I explained to him that I added more minutes to my plan based on the amount used and reported at that time, he would not refund the charges.

Fortunately I was able to talk to a nicer CSR, who refunded the charges, when I called back another time. He said that the "delayed usage" happens in an "extended network" where they have less coverage or when I'm "roaming." This is ridiculous since I was in my home area in a major city (Portland). I also picked up roaming charges while in Springfield, MA (which has great coverage), and fortunately the CSR refunded these charges as well.

They should figure out more effective billing systems between companies and not pass on these massive charges to customers. I can barely understand my bill when it comes each month, especially if there's a problem. They're not user-friendly bills and the cell phone companies have these complex rules about billing in advance and tweaking with your minutes if you change your plan during your billing cycle.

- Khaalen, Greenfield

In Sept 2003 I received a huge bill. Upon investigation, I find out that AT&T has allowed someone named David to add himself to my account and run up huge charges.

I'm going to make this UNBELIEVABLY long story short here, but I have spent the last YEAR AND A HALF dealing with his error. I STILL have creditors calling my house; my accounts are STILL screwed up, AT&T Customer Service drops my calls while we are speaking, transfers me 4 and 5 times in each call. I have had to call sometimes 3 times in ONE DAY to get someone to help due to call drops and hang-ups and transfer mistakes, sometimes just to have someone there be INCREDIBLY rude to me and insinuate that this is all my fault.

Yesterday (yes this is currently ongoing) a rep told me that our accounts are still linked and can't be separated until I have this David (I do not know this David person) call and say it's OK!!! AND that the amount due that I am in collections for is for equipment that HE bought with my account.

They will have not yet successfully dealt with my issues and will not release me from my obligation despite their GROSS INCOMPETENCE even while MY CREDIT RATING GOES BAD!!

- Elizabeth, Belmont

AT&T first... I had five phones on the family plan. I had four months of incorrect bills from AT&T with fifty plus hours of discussion time and wait time with customer service representatives. They turned off my phones twice while the reps were fixing my bills. Recently, I left AT&T to transfer to T Mobile. I still have an outstanding balance with AT&T in excess of \$800. This is fully from charges relating to termination and their handling of the bill. The AT&T sales rep agrees with me on the frivolous charges, but says that I am simply to not pay them as AT&T has controls in place to not allow you to lower the bill significantly once the customer leaves. Therefore, I have to sit with a bad mark on my credit once they pursue me through collections. I have over paid for them more than once, but I will not do it again.

T Mobile... It took three months to get a correct bill and they turned off my phones once. Much better customer service and much less time discussing the problem. I have been much happier with T Mobile, but they still had their problems. Also, AT&T has a better reception. I would take the lesser reception to have T Mobile's Customer service any day.

I do not have problems with most bills that I get. I am a mid level accountant and am very precise. I am yet to have a cell company who is great from the start.

- David, Waltham

My story is simple: Verizon's late fees are outrageous. They have always given an extremely short time for payment - less than one billing cycle - before beginning to charge interest. Starting in about October, however, they began charging \$5.00 if the payments were even 1 day late. So, my bill cycle starts on the 11th of the month, and I get the bill on about the 16th. If I don't pay the bill within 2 and 1/2 weeks, I get charged \$5.00. That is about 6000% interest (more or less)! They are crooks, looking to make a bunch of extra profit just because folks are too busy to always pay the bills exactly on time.

- Michael, Hopkinton

Started new service on Dec 17, 2004 and have not yet received a correct bill, despite 3 visits in person to a Sprint Rep, who seemed to make efforts to correct problems. Each new bill has a different error: initially charged for activation fee (which I was told I would not have), did not take off the 23% discount I'm supposed to receive as a State employee, started charging me a late fee for charges I shouldn't have received, started charging me for calls from home phone before I had used the "free" 50 minutes. A Rep finally gave me a credit on my account to clear up the past mistakes, but then in the bill I just received, they did not give me the 23% discount I should be getting. I could not reach anyone by phone, so I finally sent an email to complain.

- Aileen, Roslindale

The sales person told me that there would be fewer dropped calls (not true so far) if we migrated from ATT to Cingular because the phones are more powerful due to the sim card. I get dropped calls all the time and still cannot call from my house. As we do not have a landline this is very aggravating.

- Thomas, East Longmeadow

I was receiving private number calls endlessly everyday and at all hours of the day and night. Day after day I kept receiving these phone calls, and it got to the point that if I heard the phone ring my heart jumped. It was obviously a stalker, but since I couldn't block out private call (like you can a home phone) and I had to continue answering them (in case it was a international call which also often appears private) not only did it cost me my sanity, but alot of money since everytime I answered the call, I consumed a mobile minute. I notified the police, but since its a private number, they couldn't track the caller like they could from a home phone. I eventually had to change my number, but when you're in the business I am in (public relations) it isn't that simple. I had to call about 300 people in different countries (costing me more money) just so I could change my cell phone number. Why can't cell phone companies allow users to block incoming private calls when they originate from within the US?

- Stefani, Boston

Without a doubt the worst cell service...EVER! Constantly dropped calls, tons of "dead" spots, phones that won't charge. On the plus side their billing is usually correct.

Just my two cents!

- John, Brockton

More than once I've been told that my bill will be adjusted because of errors they've made and it has not been done. First they sent two adjustments to a collection agency and now I'm disputing two OTHER adjustments. Cingular's Executive Offices staff is driving mad (literally). We need someone to take the time to go over the bills that are in dispute. I can't believe the government is letting this huge monster feed of all of us.

- Maria, Boston

I left a previous job where I had a company cell phone for 4 years. When I left, I asked my boss if I could take the phone. My boss had been paying for the phone on a month to month plan basis, as the original contract term had expired. I informed Cingular I wanted to transfer the service to me. I was INSISTENT that they be 100% clear with me that I

was not committing to a new term or contract. They assured me that I was taking over the existing plan, which was month by month. I received the form to fill out, and the "Service Commitment" portion of the form was X'ed out with a giant X by the representative. This is the portion where the term (1 yr, 2 yr etc) would be indicated. I read the form letter by

letter, and there was nothing I objected to, so I signed it. 6 months later, I have a new job and no longer need the phone. I called to terminate, and they told me I was breaking the contract, and had to pay the \$150 early termination fee. I objected. They said it was in the contract I signed. I requested a copy of the document. I requested several times to speak to a supervisor. No one I spoke with understood of the situation, they all told me it was in the contract I signed, which was binding. I requested to speak to a supervisor, and was told they weren't available. I was told they would call me. They never did. I have been reported to collections. Now, about a month after I repeatedly requested a copy of the contract I signed, I received it in the mail. Conveniently, someone had written in the margin "1 YR EXT". This was not there when I signed the contract, nor would I have signed the contract if it had been there, as this was precisely what I asked the original sales rep about before I decided to have the service transferred to me. Cingular has been deceptive, uncooperative, and in my opinion, is using fraudulent business practices. I have a perfect credit record in jeopardy of being marred by this fraudulent behavior on behalf of Cingular. Please help.

-Bruce, Reading

I am having trouble getting good reception from my home. Even if I go on to the balcony. I sent a complaint to Customer service and got no reply, also sent letter to President of Cingular and have not heard a thing. The least they can do is acknowledge your letter. I have been a customer since about 1985 BIG DEAL to them.

Richard, Malden

My husband had a 2 yr contract with Cingular. At some point after the 2 years he unfortunately lost his cell phone. He went back to Cingular and purchased a new phone (it was not free). He did not sign any contract nor would he have if given the opportunity. After approx nine months, when the law went through that you could keep your same cell phone numbers if you switched companies, we both signed up for Nextel. As stated above, he never signed a contract!!!

Bills then started to show up from Cingular for \$175 early cancellation fee which of course we weren't going to pay. After many attempts over 6-9 months calling Cingular and them telling us to look at our contract which was allegedly "signed" we demanded that they send us a copy of the contract that we "signed". Wouldn't you know that they couldn't find a signed contract either and were forced to remove the \$175 off of our old account and call the rude collectors off of us.

The worst part was not even the hassle and annoyance of dealing with Cingular but during this time we were purchasing another house. So of course this false and misleading "uncollected" balance was on his credit report so we couldn't get the best possible rates. These companies don't realize that they are

not just messing with \$175 termination fee but they are ruining people's chances for better interest rates, potential employers who are doing credit checks, and people's time.

SOMETHING MUST BE DONE TO STOP THEM!!!!!!!!!!!!

- Tonya, Charlestown

I went to get a new battery for my old phone as the battery in it could no longer hold a charge. I was "upsold" and offered a supposed "free" phone that ended up costing me about 75.00 in "transfer & activation fees". I was told the phone would have a longer battery life, and better reception. I was also told by the dealer there was a 30 day return policy with Cingular. Well after 3 weeks the reception was so poor it made the phone unusable, so I went to return it. Now the return policy had changed from 30 days to only 15. The same guy who sold me the phone was working the counter when I attempted to return it, so I asked him why he lied to me about the length of the time I had to return it. He told me he never told me any such thing!! I called Cingular directly to lodge a complaint. Their response was "that's an independent dealer, there is nothing we can do about misinformation they provide". Funny because the sign on the door says Cingular and no where in the store is it posted or are you made aware this was an independent dealer, as if that was even an excuse. I told the customer service rep whom I called that it said Cingular on the door, this "independent dealer" was representing their company and selling their product under their license to do so, thus they are responsible for information provided. She said it doesn't work that way and that was the end of the conversation because the junk "free" 75.00 cell phone I was calling from cut her off. After holding for 20 minutes to talk to her I wasn't about to call again. The icing on the cake. When I got my bill, I was CHARGED AIR TIME to call customer service!!! I was later told that you have to dial 611 from the cell phone and not the 800# that THEY PUT ON THE BILL to have the call go through free. Funny, no where was that printed on the bill. Complaints to the better business bureau were ignored, since they can not enforce any ruling, even though they wrote to Cingular informing them I was in the right. In the end I had to pay out even more money to get a phone that actually worked. I did so only because it was less expensive than the outrageous early termination fee.

- Zachary, New Bedford

I bought a cell phone from the Verizon store paid full price also bought one for my girl friend and got on a calling plan every thing was going along fine until I had a heart attack and was unable to pay my bill I called them no less than 3 times each time I was put on hold for 45 min. or more so I would hang up and try again on another day they in the mean time had shut off my phone service My bill was 400. I wanted to make some kind of payment plan and get this cleared up when I received another bill for the \$400 plus \$175 for each phone I then called customer service again put on hold when someone answered my call he tried to help me as I explained that I had a heart attack and that I would like to pay my bill and make some sort of payment plan he thought he could help me and tried so he called billing and when he came back I was told that there was nothing they could do I explained I had been a customer for many years and never had a problem before I asked if I could speak to billing he said he was sorry he couldn't do that I'm not trying to get out of paying my bill but I think under the circumstances they could have worked with me a little more. I think the \$175 per phone to be quite excessive would like to know if there is

recourse when someone has suffered loss of income due to a debilitating heart condition what does someone do when intentions are honorable but limited.

- Lincoln, Yarmouthport

I've had a contract with AT&T, From 2001 to present. My service has always been 400 anytime minute and 2000 nights and weekends beginning from 7pm to 6.59am. When I called to complain about 36\$ being added on to my bill, due too going over my anytime minutes!! Which all of the charges were between 7pm-8pm. I was told that AT&T never offered a such contract and that my anytime minutes began after 9pm, then two minutes later I was told that he made a mistake, it was actually 8pm, which I had disagreed with. I'm sure that I'm not the only being duped, since Cingular has taken over.

- Donald, Waltham

1. Sarterd with Cingular in January of 2004, got temporary service on a new phone for my wife, she decided she liked it so we transferred her number to the new phone and canceled the old. this was done with great difficulty, hours on the phone and then I got the 1st bill which included a \$150 cancellation charge! This took a 20 minute phone call to rectify.

2. 2nd months' bill had a duplicate charge of \$9.99, another 20 minute phone call.

3. Without warning they shut off my service (4 phones) overnight on a Friday for a non-payment issue, approximately 35 days late, subsequent bill had just come in with a \$5 late fee. Couldn't call to rectify until Monday, charged \$36 for re-activation!!!! Note: They shut the phones off during a 'free" period" ensuring no lost revenue/no cost! What's upsetting is how they can use the phone to notify you of the billing issue but they can't use it to warn you of a pending shut off!!!!

- Ronald, Haverhill

I became customer of tmobile in 2004. I asked for insurance on the phone. after few months I noticed on the bill that I was not charged fort insurance. I asked the company and they told me that I never asked for it. I told them to check the contract I signed and they will see it marked on it. They didn't have it. I dug out my copy from storage(I had moved) . send them the copy and they said they will sign me up for it. Ever since I have been paying for it. There insurance people are called assurion. Later after about 5/6 month I lost my phone and asked for replacement I discovered that I did not have coverage as I waited too long to sign up. I told every one that it was they who made a mistake by not signing up.

Assurion tells me to talk to tmobile. T mobile tells me to talk to assurion. PLEASE NOTE THAT I AM STILL PAYING FOR INSURANCE WHILE I HAVE A BORROWED PHONE FROM A FRIEND. THEY ALSO RENEWED MY CONTRACT ON THERE OWN FOR 2 YEARS. AFTYER MAKING A FUSS THEY REMOVED THE RENEWAL . I have since called company ,supervisors of both company. No results. They seem to have one track mind. The corporate officers are accessible only by fax # . The worst company I have ever dealt with. I am disappointed .They tell me that they can refund my insurance money. There is a contradiction. I thought it was separate insurance company. I believe there should be very strong laws. Every company should be forced to list there contact #s publicly. That is corporation contact #s. There should be no mandatory contracts. Let the market decide. if the phone

company deserves it will retain the customer. The sad fact is that most people don't have time to be engaging in these repeated episodes of complaints. By the way I am sending the copy of this fax to customer service fax # to see if that might help. I have my doubts.

- Ahmed, Reading

I am a Cingular Wireless customer and, until recently, I have never had any problems with my service. Actually I would tell people that Cingular was one of the best companies to get service from, but now I feel like telling them I want my phone shut off. Of course they'll charge an arm and leg for the cut off fee.

What happen to make me feel this way is that at the beginning of the year, I got an offer from the company for an upgrade to a new phone. The offer was a new free phone and all I would pay is shipping. So I called to get the offer. At the time I also wanted to switch to a family plan so I figured I'd do both, get the phone and a new plan. Well, I was on the phone for over a half hour with someone who seemed he wasn't sure if he had done the offer right but he said the phone was on its way and will arrive in a week. I wait a week, no phone. I call back to see if I can get a tracking number for the package. They don't have me calling to get the offer in the computer. They ask if I have the offer's phone number, the CS agent calls and talks to one of the people at the number they have no idea about the phone. They tell me I have to order a new phone. I actually got a better offer the second time. Throughout this whole entire machination I can't switch plans without the new phone.

So a week later phone number 2 arrives and I activate it and switch my plan, but because I'm in the middle of the billing cycle I was told by the CS agent that in order not to accumulate overages she'll change me over to the new plan as soon as the next billing cycle begins. A week later Phone number 1 arrives. I call to tell them the back story they say send it back we will pay shipping just fax us the receipt and we'll credit you.

Meanwhile, one month later I'm still on the same plan. I call again to ask why I haven't been switched. They don't have me requesting the change. So again I switch my plan. I ask "will I get overage charges"? "Nope". Wrong. I just recently got the bill \$14.40 worth of overage charges. Why? Because I was switch during the billing cycle. I called today to straighten it out. Fortunately they revoke the charges.

But there is also another issue that bothered me and I brought it up to the agent. The fact that if Cingular cannot recognize or get the phone number of the incoming caller they put my number in it place. So it looks as though I've been talking to myself for so many minutes. Tell you the truth these pass 5 months, in which I had to deal with these problems, makes me feel as though I have been talking to myself. (According to Cingular they do that because either the number is private or the company that the caller is affiliated, other than Cingular, will not allow the caller's ID to be known to other wireless companies, ergo, they can't print the caller's number on the bill). How do I know if those calls have actually been made? For all I know I'm being charged for calls that may have not been made or received.

By the way the payment of the shipping back of phone 1 I just got that today too. Only because I told the CS agent and she put the credit through. Today is May 5, 2005 I faxed it on March 29, 2005. But it

would have been nice if someone called to tell me they got it my number was on the fax sheet.

Well that's my story.

-Louise, Malden

I contacted Verizon wireless November 18, 2004 questioning a bill I received that had \$123.43 in charges for calls made during off-peak hours. I spoke to an extremely rude woman at customer service named Atasha. She claim that off-peak time changed to 9PM to 6AM, which was totally new to me. She tried to force me into a new plan that would give me free mobile to mobile, more minutes, yet I had to keep telling her I wanted the plan that I had signed up for 2 years ago, that I did not want nor id I authorize Verizon to change my plan. I advised her that if I could not have the plan I signed up for, that I wanted to cancel my service. It was at this point that she started yelling at me, telling me I couldn't cancel my service, that I had to pay what ever Verizon charged me, there was nothing I could do about it. It got to the point that I told her to shut up and stop interrupting me while I was speaking. She continued to yell at me and interrupt me when I was trying to talk, telling me that she was going to make me pay \$175 to cancel my service. That I had signed an agreement. I told her that I did not have a contract with verizon, had not had one for many years and finally hung up on her. Not 5 minutes after the conversation with this woman, my service was shut off. Since this individual took it upon herself to shut off my phone, than I consider the relationship between me and Verizon has been terminated by them. I paid the bill I had, prorating the month to the 18th of the month. Then spoke with a regional manager, Micheal Desir, who has acknowledged improper behavior of the customer service rep, but said more or less, tough. I've also contacted National Acct mgrs, who have apologized profusely but gave no resolution. I filed a complaint with the BBB, who has recommended I file a complaint with the FCC, which I have done and am still waiting for a response. Verizon has now sent me to a collection agency, claiming I owe \$307.74 for a service that I haven't had for 8 months. I've subsequently learned that the plan I had with Verizon was discontinued and they apparently put those customers into other plans. I also spoke with many many people that I knew to be customers and they were led to believe that their off peak time were 7PM to 7AM, which is what I thought. In January 2005 I went into a Verizon store pretending to be a new customer, asking questions, and was told by an employee there that off peak times was 7PM to 7AM. When I said how unusual that was, the woman told me that "Verizon is the only wireless provided that offers off peak times like this, that is why Verizon is the better place to be". Now I'm waiting to be taken to court. I'm not letting go of this. I feel Verizon Wireless has behaved unethically. Their employees are either told to lie to customers or do it for some other reason I can't fathom, but they do it. Verizon needs to learn they can't lie to customers, they can't force customers into agreements with out their knowledge. I was told that I had signed a contract, yet they have refused to provide me a copy.

- Shari, Weymouth

Tell us your story: For approximately the last year the cell phone service with calls connecting and dropped calls has been totally ridiculous. I live in the Roxbury North Dorchester and most times when I leave my house it takes my phone a half a mile before I can use it. When I call the Nextel help line for service they have told me in order for their engineers to test my phone I have to call from another line. That's crazy since I'm working from the field and have no other line to get to. My dropped calls have gotten even worse. The areas that I have to work in are in the "Dead Zone", and if I have an important

call or have to respond to a supervisor it is impossible especially around Hyde Park Ave , Grove Hall , Downtown Boston, or near my home on Humboldt ave. The Mayor drew a map of the dead zone for the Boston Globe depicting my point exactly. The City of Boston Has 1400 of these phones and I'm just a consumer but they have lousy service and I'm stuck with this plan until March of 2006 or I pay a shut off fee of about 200.00.

- Richard, Dorchester

My situation is this, I have been a customer w/att&t since 2001. Over the years phones have broke for no reason, and I have had to either purchase a new phone, or they give me one for free and they ALWAYS made me sign a 2 yr contract. At the moment this phone I have now was replaced last May and now they told me that it is no longer under warranty so I have to purchase a new phone and SIGN for another 12-24 months. I don't get it, why can't I just replace the phone and pick up where I left off, why all this prorate crap and longer contract etc.

- Maureen, Billerica

2/28/05