



## Who We Are

Attorney General  
Tom Miller  
Office Directory

## What We Do

Protecting Consumers  
Fighting Crime  
Helping Victims of  
Crime  
Working for Farmers  
Protecting the  
Environment  
Raising Child Support  
Awareness  
Representing State  
Government  
Issuing Attorney  
General Opinions  
Enforcing Tobacco Laws  
Protecting Utility  
Customers

## Resources

File a Consumer  
Complaint  
Other Complaint  
Resources  
News Releases &  
Publications  
Legal Resources  
Jobs & Internships  
Contact Us

## Consumer Advisory Bulletin- May 2006

## How to Choose a Cell Phone Plan That Works Best for You

Are you shopping for cell phone service for the first time, or considering a new plan? The basic approach is to determine your calling needs, and then shop carefully.

### Here are some basic tips for choosing wireless phone service:

- **Study which kind of service best fits your calling needs.** There are local, regional, or national plans, family plans for two or more phones, and pre-paid plans. Consider which plan is best for the time of day and number and length of calls you will make. You pay a hefty charge for minutes that exceed your plan, so study the details. Many plans offer far more minutes for "weekend" or "night" calls, but "weekend" may not include Friday, and "night" may not begin until 9 p.m.
- **Determine which company provides the best service for you.** Ask to see a coverage map, especially if you travel frequently. Check your home calling area and where "roaming charges" apply. (Outside your home area, the phone may not work, or you may incur costly roaming charges.) Ask if the company has a trial period (often 15-30 days), and then check to be sure you get a good signal where you need it, such as at your home or office, or places you visit often.
- **Check the length of the contract** -- and if there is a "break fee" should you want to cancel your plan early. Most cell phone service plans run one or two years and require you to pay a hefty \$100-200 termination fee per phone if you cancel your service before the end of the plan. Before you choose a plan, find out if you can get out of the contract without paying a fee if it turns out you can't make calls from your home, office, or other place from which you plan to make calls.
- **Compare cell phone manufacturer warranties.** Most cell phone contracts don't provide you with a free cell phone if your initial cell phone is damaged or simply doesn't work. Consider an extended warranty and how much it might cost.
- **Check for complaints about providers.** Call the Attorney General's Office or the Better Business Bureau, and ask your friends and neighbors about their experience.
- Go to [www.iowaAttorneyGeneral.org](http://www.iowaAttorneyGeneral.org) for more tips and helpful links. (Click on "Protecting Consumers" and then look for "Consumer Advisory" bulletins.)

For more information or to file a complaint, contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division, Des Moines, Iowa 50319. Call 515-281-5926.

**More Sources on Choosing Cell Phone Plans Suggested by the Office of Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller:**

1. [Federal Communications Commission](#)

2. [AARP](#)

3. [Wireless Guide](#)

4. [Wireless Advisor](#)

[Return to Consumer Advisories](#)

State of Iowa Privacy Statement Translation PDF Reader