

Cutting Cell Phone Costs

(NAPSA)—If you've been looking for ways to cut back your household budget, it might be time to talk cell phones.

More than 160 million of us own one, and mobile phone users spend more than \$143 billion each year on service, according to CTIA, the wireless trade association. But experts say prepaid cell phone services might help you take control of that spending and take the sting out of fluctuating monthly bills.

According to the nonprofit Telecommunications Research and Action Center (TRAC), switching to prepaid services can produce one of the most dramatic savings for cell phone users. And, as economists have been advising, moving from a credit to cash mentality can be a good cost-control idea that helps ensure consumers can afford the lifestyle they are leading.

Justin Brennan, a director for a leading prepaid provider, Boost Mobile, offers these additional tips for finding value and simplicity in a mobile phone service:

1. Pay as you wish—Prepay customers don't receive a bill. Instead, they purchase minutes up front, then the cost of calls sent or received are deducted from their account balance. Because costs are paid in advance, prepaid cellular services require no credit check, no contract and no monthly charges. And now, most prepaid wireless providers let you pay for service by minute, day or month. Knowing exactly how much you are spending on your mobile phone service is helpful.

2. Choose a phone that will last—The average U.S. cell phone is replaced every 18 months, according to the EPA, and replacement-phone sales average more than \$100 million every year. The lesson here: Consider purchasing a durable phone that can withstand dust, shock, drops and spills.



Prepaid mobile phone service could help you take control of cell phone bills.

3. Take advantage of unlimited calls—If you're a heavy user, look into prepaid wireless plans that offer unlimited services, such as unlimited text messaging, unlimited mobile to mobile calling and unlimited night and weekend calling, or let you make unlimited local and nationwide long-distance calls for a fixed monthly price.

4. Cut your costs in half—Eliminate your landline service altogether and go all mobile. According to a recent study by the Pew Research Center, approximately a quarter of all landline phone users in the U.S. say they are very likely or somewhat likely to convert to being only cell phone users.

5. Save Your Minutes—With walkie-talkie services, customers don't have to use their cellular minutes. Instead, they can connect at the push of a button with push-to-talk service. For example, Boost Mobile Walkie-Talkie is compatible with many millions of users at Sprint and Nextel as well as providers in Mexico and South America. Their prepaid service costs just a dollar a day for unlimited nationwide usage and the fee is only charged on days when the walkie-talkie service is actually used.

For more information, visit www.boostmobile.com.