



# Retention Periods of Major Cellular Service Providers

Data gathered by the Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section, U.S. Department of Justice

|                                  | Verizon  | T-Mobile   | AT&T/Cingular   | Sprint                        | Nextel                        | Virgin Mobile <sup>1</sup>                                    |
|----------------------------------|--|--|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Subscriber Information           | Post-paid: 3-5 years*  | 5 years  | Depends on length of service  | Unlimited                     | Unlimited                     | Unlimited   |
| Call detail records              | 1 rolling year   | Pre-paid: 2 years<br>Post-paid: 5 years                                    | Pre-paid: varies<br>Post-paid: 5-7 years                                  | 18-24 months                  | 18-24 months                  | 2 years   |
| Cell towers used by phone        | 1 rolling year   | Officially 4-6 months, really a year or more                               | From July 2008  | 18-24 months                  | 18-24 months                  | Not retained - obtain through Sprint                          |
| Text message detail              | 1 rolling year   | Pre-paid: 2 years<br>Post-paid: 5 years                                    | Post-paid: 5-7 years  | 18 months (depends on device) | 18 months (depends on device) | 60-90 days  |
| Text message content             | 3-5 days   | Not retained   | Not retained  | Not retained                  | Not retained                  | 90 days (search warrant required with "text of text" request) |
| Pictures                         | Only if uploaded to website (customer can add or delete pictures any time) | Can be stored online and are retained until deleted or service is canceled | Not retained  | Contact provider              | Contact provider              | Not retained  |
| IP session information           | 1 rolling year   | Not retained   | Only retained on non-public IPs for 72 hours. If public IP, not retained. | 60 days                       | 60 days                       | Not retained  |
| IP destination information       | 90 days  | Not retained   | Only retained on non-public IPs for 72 hours. If public IP, not retained. | 60 days                       | 60 days                       | Not retained  |
| Bill copies (post-paid only)     | 3-5 years, but only last 12 months readily available                       | Not retained   | 5-7 years   | 7 years                       | 7 years                       | n/a <sup>‡</sup>  |
| Payment history (post-paid only) | 3-5 years, check copies for 6 months*                                      | 5 years  | Depends on length of service  | (Un)limited                   | Unlimited                     | n/a <sup>‡</sup>  |
| Store Surveillance Videos        | Typically 30 days  | 2 weeks  | Depends. Most stores carry for 1-2 months                                 | Depends                       | Depends                       | n/a   |
| Service Applications             | Post-paid: 3-5 years*  | Not retained   | Not retained  | Depends                       | Depends                       | Not retained  |

\* May vary by former company

\*\* For records older than mid-Nov. 2007, Sprint can only provide bill reprints with outgoing info

‡ No bill copies, but list of credit card transactions does not expire

<sup>1</sup> Virgin Mobile is now owned by Sprint. Since companies have separate compliance offices, for now they are listed separately.