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# Cell Phones

are part of everyday life. Here on Okinawa, there are unique aspects of buying a cell phone that buyers need to be aware of to ensure they are prepared to make informed decisions on choosing a service provider, structuring their service plan, and knowing basic rules to assist in managing their cell phone bills.

**Step 1:** Choose a cellphone service provider. There are three available on Okinawa (in no particular order): Softbank, AU, and DoCoMo. Softbank and AU have both on and off-base stores, while DoCoMo stores are located off-base only. All three have English-speaking staffs.

**Step 2:** Choose your phone and type of service plan. (Options vary according to the different companies) Ensure you ask the provider for details on what is included in each “plan” like available minutes, cost per minute after you have exceeded your plan’s minutes, free calls and text messages, etc.

(1) Pre-paid phones and the associated pre-paid phone cards. These require you to purchase the phone outright (typically ~\$40-\$50) and then you would purchase pre-paid minutes in various amounts depending on how much you want to spend.

(2) Month-to-month contract. This type of contract requires you to purchase the phone outright and depending on the type of “plan” you choose, there is a pre-set amount of minutes and data (for smart phones) per month—

(3) Two-year contract. If you decide to enter into this type of contract, you need to decide if you want to buy the phone outright and then sign up for the contracted service only, or have the price of the phone spread out amongst the duration of the contract. Like with the month-to-month contract, each “plan” has a different combination of minutes and data. Ask questions.

**Step 3:** In order to start any type of contract-based cell phone service, (pre-paid phones are not included) you must present a copy of your PCS orders that brought you to Okinawa along with your military ID. Other forms of ID you may use include stateside driver’s license, SOFA license, and/or Passport. Depending on the company, they may or may not ask to retain a copy of both the PCS orders and whichever form of ID you present.

**Step 4:** You will be required to initiate an automatic payment process either with a valid credit card or with an account at with an automatic bill-paying service (automatic payments are required by all three phone companies) Ask the service provider for details about the automatic payment options they accept.

**Step 5:** Most new phones with contracts take time to process and charge the phone. The cell phone provider will give you a time to return to their store to pick up your phone.

**\*Note:** There is important information about cell phone contracts that you need to be aware of. (See Guide Issue #8: Critical Information for Cell Phones)

**Disclaimer:** This information is compiled from local cell-phone company public-facing websites and is available from each service provider upon request. This guide is intended as a quick reference guide only. III MEF does not imply ownership of this information nor endorsement of any particular cell phone service provider or type of service plan. For further details, contact your local cell phone service provider.