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that you need to be aware of before you decide on a service provider, type of phone, (pre-paid, flip-up or Smart) contract structure and type of plan to ensure you are prepared to make informed decisions and to assist you in managing your cell phone bill.

(1) If you choose the two-year contract option, you MUST be aware of certain policies that exist no matter which service provider you choose.

(2) After the initial 24 month contract is completed, you have 30 DAYS from the expiration date of your initial contract to change your service plan. You can cancel your service, change it to month-to-month, or renew for another 24 months. There are no one-year contracts. *You must go into the service provider's store to make any changes, otherwise your contract will AUTOMATICALLY RENEW FOR AN ADDITIONAL 24 MONTHS. Some companies do not offer month-to-month service plans, so you need to decide on a plan that best fits your budget and your remaining time on-island.

(3) If your credit card or automatic payment method declines payment to your service provider, for any reason, ON THE FIRST ATTEMPT, you will automatically be mailed a hard copy of your bill to the address you provided during the sign-up. If you have changed addresses since your then, the bill may be returned to the provider as undeliverable and you may begin accruing late fees, not aware that you've missed a payment. To avoid this, keep your address updated with your cell phone service provider.

(4) If you do not receive your phone bill because you never updated your mailing address, you are still responsible for paying the any missed payments and associated fees. This can be the beginning sequence towards a suspended phone and expensive phone bill. If you miss three consecutive months' worth of payments, your phone service will normally be suspended and fees assessed to reactivate.

(5) If you travel off-island, outside of the Kingdom of Japan, and use your phone, you will accrue global roaming charges from whatever service provider your phone/device is pulling from. To avoid this, YOU MUST ENABLE AIRPLANE MODE (on Smart Devices) or not use your phone (even texts). However, on airplane mode smart devices can still connect to Wi-Fi hot spots without accruing fees.

(6) Contracts cannot be suspended/put on hold during TAD/deployment like they can in the states. However, you can have your service plan reduced to the minimum amount required just to keep your phone number active. You need to discuss this option with your service provider, as some contacts and plans have discounts built in that are nullified by reducing your plan.

(7) Most contracts are transferrable to another person, this is a good option for someone leaving permanently or if leaving for an extended period. Another option is cancelling the contract early. [None of the provider honor routine PCS orders] If you have spread out the cost of your phone or device through the duration of the contract, and you cancel early, you are responsible for paying the remainder of the balance of the phone or device as well as the cancellation fee (around \$100).

(8) However, when there are unforeseen circumstances that result in an early departure from Okinawa, you may be able to cancel the remainder of your contract without owing the balance of your phone. Ask your service provider if they offer a waiver for special circumstances that would allow you to cancel your contract early and return the phone.

(9) Second hand (used) phones from same the company can usually be activated with a new contract instead of buying a new phone.

(10) Ask your provider for the date each month that your payment is due as well as when the last payment is due after cancelling a contract. If you are scheduled to leave the island before your contract expires, it is recommended that you cancel your contract at least one month prior to leaving to avoid owing a "final bill" after you have already left the island.

Disclaimer: This information is compiled from local Okinawa websites and 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. For further details, contact your cell phone service provider.