



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 ¹
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 Post-paid: 5 years	Pre-paid: varies 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 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 [‡]
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 [‡]
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

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