

Veterans eligible for cell phone discounts

by **Parker Leavitt** - Jun. 13, 2009 12:00 AM
The Arizona Republic

Military veterans and active-duty personnel are eligible for significant discounts on cellphone plans - if they know to ask.

There are over 23 million veterans in the U.S. and nearly 600,000 in Arizona. Many are unaware of the potential savings on their monthly cellphone bills.

Monthly military discounts range from 15 percent on Verizon Wireless plans to 10 percent off - and no activation fee - on T-Mobile agreements. Alltel, Sprint and AT&T offer similar discounts. Cricket Wireless could not be reached for comment.

While not everyone knows about the discounts, those who do say that getting the companies to register them for the cheaper plans is no easy task.

Phoenix resident Janis Johnson said she called her cellphone company to register her husband, an Air Force veteran. At first, a customer service representative said no veteran discount existed.

"Then she said we should get the 15 percent discount, but we were supposed to go to the Web site," she said.

Johnson eventually gave up when she could find no place online to register.

Kenneth James Madetzke, 60, of Phoenix, had better luck. The Vietnam War veteran was able to sign up for AT&T's discounted plan and saves about \$8 a month.

"It makes me feel good to have the money savings and be recognized as a veteran," Madetzke said. "The disappointment was that there was no advertisement. I had to pull it out of them."

While waiting for doctor's appointments at the VA hospital, Madetzke often tells fellow veterans about the discount. Most, he said, know nothing about the deals.

Bill Messer, president of Vietnam Veterans of America's Arizona State Council, said he used Verizon and hadn't heard of the discount.

Verizon spokeswoman Jenny Weaver said the firm makes an effort to inform veterans of the savings, with in-store posters and military-magazine ads.

"There aren't any posters up in the Phoenix metro area right now, because of some of the other promotions we have going on," Weaver said.

Most services require a military identification card, veteran identification card or military discharge papers as proof of veteran status. Some companies require online registration to get the discount.

Many companies, including Verizon, also offer discounted plans for customers 65 and older