



SACTA STATEMENT ON BLACKLISTING OF CELLPHONES IN SOUTH AFRICA

SACTA (South African Cellular Telecommunications Association) is an independent non-profit organisation representing the mobile, cellular, public switched and fixed mobile telecommunications industry within the Republic of South Africa.

SACTA aims to be a source of credible information, guidance, co-operation and communication for the local and global telecommunications industry, the public, regulator and Government on matters relating to radiofrequency emissions and health and safety.

SACTA recognises the prime importance of all health, education and technology issues related to the use of mobile phones, as well as the need for presentation of factual information on these issues in an easily accessible format for the public.

The Cellular Network Operators signed a Blacklisting Memorandum of Understanding (“Blacklisting MoU”) with Business Against Crime (BAC) and the South African Police Service (SAPS) on 13 April 2005, to put in place a Blacklisting solution across these networks in South Africa, in an effort to combat crime. To date hundreds of thousands of cellphones have been blacklisted. The number of blacklisted stolen, lost, and destroyed cellphones are steadily increasing every month, since the launch of this initiative. The Operators and Manufacturers together with Business Against Crime and Government are working closely together to develop new policies and crime prevention measures to enhance the current Blacklisting MoU and achieve greater effectiveness in combating cellphone theft.

Cellphone blacklisting

Each cellphone is programmed with a unique IMEI (International Mobile Equipment Identity) number. The IMEI is separate from the identity of the SIM card. On each network, any call that is made is linked to both the handset IMEI identity and to the SIM card identity. This means that, it is possible to determine which SIM was used with which cellphone (IMEI), and vice versa. A customer can determine the IMEI number of their cellphone by dialling *#06# on the keypad of the cellphone.

Reprogramming of IMEI numbers of cellphones

If a stolen cellphone is blacklisted it is useless in South Africa, and so there should be little point in stealing it. It has been established however, that there are criminals who

make use of reprogramming equipment to change the IMEI numbers of stolen cellphones.

Handset manufacturers have in an effort to prevent this type of crime, increased software and hardware security on new cellphone makes and models. Such features include improved software encryption, dispersing the IMEI on various chips in the handset to make it harder to locate and change, and making more use of the IMEI hardware to store information, since it is the software that is changed when these devices are reprogrammed. This will lessen the effectiveness of reprogramming equipment and improved handset security will be available to more subscribers.

Legislation

Section 41 of the Regulation of Interception of Communications and Provision of Communication Related information Act no.70 of 2002 (RICA), compels any person whose cellphone has been lost, stolen, or destroyed, to report this incident to any police station as soon as possible. It is an offence to fail to report loss of a cellphone, and if prosecuted and found guilty, one could face a maximum sentence of 2 years imprisonment, or a fine. Victims of cellphone theft are therefore encouraged to report incidents at all times.

The Regulation of Interception of Communications and Provision of communication-Related Act (RICA) also prohibits any person from intentionally, and unlawfully, modifying, tampering, or reconfiguring a cell phone. Even attempting to do so, or allowing another person to do so is a serious criminal offence, for which a convicted criminal could face imprisonment of 20 years, or a fine up to 20 Million Rand.

SACTA believes that the Blacklisting initiative which allows customers to blacklist a stolen, lost or damaged cellphone, which deems this cellphone unusable on any network in South Africa, is an important initiative which can contribute positively on the fight against crime.

END

Editor notes:

Who should a customer contact to blacklist their stolen, lost or damaged cellphone?

- **Cell C customers** : Dial 140 toll free from Cell C numbers
: Dial 084 140 from any other network at standard cellular rates
- **MTN customers** : Dial 083 173 or 083 1 808 from a fixed line or a non-MTN cell phone
- : Dial 173 (general/prepaid) from an MTN cell phone
: Dial 808 (contract subscribers) from an MTN cell phone
- **Vodacom customers** : Dial 111, free from a Vodacom cellphone
: Dial 082 111 from any other phone (applicable call rates apply)