

Carriers agree to disable stolen phones for good

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(AP) -- Cellphone companies and the government are trying to make it as difficult to use a stolen cellphone as it is to sell a stolen car.

U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer said in a statement late Monday that major cellphone carriers and the [Federal Communications Commission](#) have agreed to set up a database of identification numbers that are unique to each phone.

Using the list, cellular carriers will be able to permanently disable a phone once it's been reported stolen. Until now, U.S. carriers have only been disabling so-called "SIM" cards, which can be swapped in and out. That's enabled a black market to exist for stolen phones.

Schumer said that the goal of the agreement is to make a stolen cellphone "as worthless as an empty wallet."

He has said that unique ID numbers known as International Mobile Equipment Identity numbers are already effectively used in Europe to deter stealing.

Schumer also said he will introduce legislation to make it a federal crime to alter or tamper with a phone's IMEI number.

According to New York police, 42 percent of all property crimes of individuals in New York City in 2011 involved a cell phone, and some crimes have been accompanied by violence. Both iPhones and [Android](#)

phones use [SIM card](#) technology that makes them susceptible to being resold after thefts.

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