



STOPPING THEFTS OF MOBILE PHONES, AGREEMENT BETWEEN OPERATORS

Rome, January 12, 2002 - The mobile operators, Blu, Omnitel Vodafone, TIM and Wind have today reached agreement regarding a joint black list of the codes of stolen (or lost) mobile handsets, thereby rendering such phones unusable on any Italian network.

The agreement was reached thanks to the cooperation of the four operators, who over recent weeks had set up a joint working party to come up with the blocking system. Any customer whose mobile is either stolen or lost can thus directly ask her operator to place a block on the phone by making a simple report. The block, which is in addition to the de-activation of the number already available, will be progressively introduced on the networks of all four Italian operators, thus making it impossible to use such phones throughout the country.

The working party now has the job of rendering the agreement operative.

Technically, the IMEI (International Mobile Equipment Identity) code present in every handset sold is normally combined with a SIM card (Subscriber Identification Module), which contains the telephone number assigned to a customer. Until today stolen mobiles could easily be reused by inserting a SIM card different from the original, which was blocked at the customer's request, with a new number.

All mobile customers should note that their phone's IMEI code is clearly shown, not only on the handset itself, but also in a series of yellow adhesive labels contained in the packaging at the time of purchase. Customers are therefore advised to keep a record of the code in a safe place so that it may be easily found in the event of theft or loss.

The initiative is intended to discourage mobile phone theft, even if the phenomenon has never been particularly critical in Italy and has never reached the levels seen in other European countries. Italian operators are among the first in Europe to reach such an agreement at national level.

The Italian initiative represents a voluntary approach and, whilst requiring substantial investment, does not produce economic advantages for the operators, but benefits for customers, and more in general the public as a whole, as a contribution to the fight against petty crime.