

## [Mobile carriers seek to block Skype on iPhone, BlackBerry](#)

### **A legal stoush is brewing between carriers and consumers regarding the use of VoIP over 3G mobile phones.**

iPhone users are taking up arms against some of the world's largest telcos in an effort to use Skype over the 3G airwaves. With the support of Apple, mobile carriers in the US, Canada and Germany have blocked Skype from their networks so that the popular VoIP service can be run only over a local Wi-Fi connection.

Since its release last Tuesday, Skype has become the most popular download at Apple's iPhone software store. But AT&T in the US, Canada's Rogers and T-Mobile in Germany are all on the front line to defend what they see as their right to determine how their networks are used.

Consumer concerns are amplified because exclusivity deals inked with Apple ensure that AT&T and T-Mobile are the sole iPhone carriers in their respective countries.

T-Mobile's aggressive stance goes a step beyond merely a mere 3G lockout. The carrier has also banned Skype from its extensive network of Wi-Fi hotspots and says it will cancel the contract of subscribers who install any workarounds to bypass their block.

The reasons, say T-Mobile, are purely technical rather than economical. A spokesman for T-Mobile told German media that the company has been in fact blocking all VoIP applications over its mobile network for two years.

"There are two reasons for this – because the high level of traffic would hinder our network performance, and because if the Skype program didn't work properly, customers would make us responsible for it."

The people behind the world's leading VoIP application are not impressed. Skype's general counsel, Robert Miller, has called the decision "an April's Fool joke at the expense of Skype users in Germany".

"What amazes me is that Skype is the number one download on the App Store in Germany, and yet the country's dominant telecom operator has already made it known that it would block the use of Skype on iPhone (and on [BlackBerry](#)), both for its mobile network customers, and at its Wi-Fi hotspots" Miller [wrote](#) on the company's blog.

"They pretend that their action has to do with technical concerns; this is baseless. Skype works perfectly well on iPhone, as hundreds of thousands of people globally can already readily attest. This arbitrary blocking of Skype represents a barrier to online business put in place by a private company just because they can, because they control access to the Internet."

Unfortunately, it appears little can be done to set Skype free. "Every other German mobile operator contractually forbids consumers from using VoIP applications", Miller notes. "German or EU regulation does not forbid such blatantly unfair practices".

Things are different in the US, where the 'open Internet' advocacy group Free Press has asked the FCC to consider if Apple and AT&T are violating federal rules by restricting Skype to just Wi-Fi.