



By [Kellie Woodhouse](#)
Higher education reporter

No phone service? No problem: U-M tries to fix bad reception at Michigan Stadium

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A fan uses his cell phone at the Big House. It's empty, so he's probably not encountering any problems.

Lon Horwedel | AnnArbor.com

Yes. We know, it's annoying.

You're at the **Big House**, trying to call a friend about the unbelievable pass you just saw **Denard Robinson** throw (it's complete!) and... nothing.

No voice on other end. No ring tone. No operator. No service.

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How many times have you been denied cell phone use at the Big House because there's just too many people and not enough service capacity? Too many, based on customer complaints.

"You've got a small city in a very small space so trying to get them all the service they want is pretty difficult," said **Andrew Palms, U-M executive director of communications systems and data centers.**

For **Verizon** customers, this annoyance has been [allayed](#) lately due to a new antenna system deployed at **Michigan Stadium.**

They can call, text and even tweet with no problems.

And soon, **AT&T** customers may join in the cell phone call-making and -receiving bliss.

The university recently installed a distributed antenna system as a part of its [Enhanced Cellular Coverage Program.](#) Since the beginning of the football season, Verizon has taken advantage of the system. The technology can service multiple carriers.

According to Palms, AT&T is taking heed.

The cellular service giant is in the process of testing the new [Distributed Antenna System](#), a technology designed by [ExteNet Systems.](#)

Sprint is also considering joining, Palms said.

Participating companies pay ExteNet for use. ExteNet in turn pays U-M for access to university facilities and space.

Palms declined to disclose U-M's financial gain in the deal.

"The carriers and the third-party provider would rather that I not give that information out freely," he said. "At the end of the day what the university is really interested in is just providing the coverage."

Coverage is primarily a problem during halftime and immediately before and after a game.

"People are trying to find each other and link up; all of a sudden it gets really clogged up," Palms said, adding that at halftime "people must be taking pictures and wanting to send them to their friends."

"It's actually a very interesting problem," he said.

The university also has plans to install the system in more than 200 campus buildings and parking structures over the next two years, improving cellular coverage in more than 25 million square feet of space.

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