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Cingular Profit Up on Subscriber Growth **FILED⁴**

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ATLANTA (AP) -- Cingular Wireless LLC, the nation's largest cell phone provider, swung to a profit in the fourth quarter on strong subscriber and revenue growth.

The Atlanta-based company said Tuesday it earned \$204 million in the three months ending Dec. 31, compared to a loss of \$495 million in the same period a year ago.

Revenue from October through December increased more than 24 percent to \$8.85 billion, compared to \$7.12 billion a year ago.

Cingular said it finished 2005 with 54.1 million subscribers. It had a net increase of 1.8 million subscribers in the fourth quarter.

Cingular held on to the No. 1 spot in subscribers. But figures released Tuesday by Verizon Wireless show the No. 2 provider is fast gaining on Cingular. Verizon Wireless, based in Bedminster, N.J., said it ended 2005 with 51.3 million customers, a 7.5 million customer increase over 2004. Cingular added 5 million customers last year.

For the year, Cingular said it made a profit of \$333 million, compared to a profit of \$201 million for all of 2004. Twelve-month revenue rose to \$34.43 billion, compared to \$19.57 billion for 2004.

The year-ago figures for the fourth quarter and full year were skewed somewhat by the fact that the merger of Cingular and AT&T Wireless Inc. was not completed until October 2004.

Average monthly revenue per user declined 1.3 percent in the fourth quarter to \$48.86, compared to \$49.51 in the same period a year ago. Monthly churn -- the rate at which customers switch to other providers -- dropped to 2.1 percent, compared to 2.6 percent in the year-ago period.

Operating expenses in the fourth quarter totaled \$8.3 billion.

Cingular is a joint venture of Atlanta-based BellSouth Corp. and San Antonio-based AT&T Inc., the renamed SBC Communications Inc. Verizon Wireless is a venture of telecommunications companies Verizon Communications Inc. of New York and Vodafone Group PLC of

the United Kingdom.

On the Net:

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