

Customer data may be sold in RadioShack bankruptcy

By Joshua Brustein, BloombergBusiness

The remnants of RadioShack's retail empire went on the auction block on Monday, giving bidders the first chance to snap up the company's trademarks, patents, leases—and the names, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers of millions of RadioShack customers.

For RadioShack itself, the stakes are enormous. Bloomberg News reported Tuesday morning that Standard General, a hedge fund that is one of RadioShack's creditors, has won the auction. Hanging in the balance on Thursday, when a federal bankruptcy court is expected to approve or reject the asset sale, is the continuation of the 94-year-old retailer's operations. Standard General has said it will try to keep the retail chain operating on a smaller scale.

RadioShack's customers—even those whose most recent purchase came years ago—could also find themselves sold off in the deal. The company included personal data in its bankruptcy auction as its own asset class. A website maintained by Hilco Streambank, which is serving as an intermediary for RadioShack, says that more than 13 million e-mail addresses and 65 million customer names and physical address files are for sale. Hilco Streambank is careful to note that the bankruptcy court might not approve the deals, and there have already been two legal filings in attempts to block the sale of customer data.

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