

Background

Many consumers find the offers they receive for new telephone service – especially long distance service – confusing. Here is a guide to some common terms used to describe the different types of telephone service.

Types of Service

- **Local Exchange Service**

Local exchange service provides calling within your exchange. An exchange is a specified area which usually encompasses a city, town, or village and its environs.

- **Local Toll (intraLATA) Service**

Local toll service (also called intraLATA, local long distance, or regional toll service) provides calling within a geographic area known as a Local Access and Transport Area (LATA). Per-minute toll charges usually apply to these calls. LATAs were formed in 1984 when the former Bell System was broken up into Bell Operating Companies, which handled local exchange and local toll services, and AT&T, which handled interLATA long distance service in competition with other long distance providers. Today, these companies (or the companies they have become) handle all types of calls, but LATAs still define local toll calling areas.

Local toll calls may be made within your area code or to a different area code across town, in the next county, or, in some cases, an adjoining state. You must dial “1” before making a local toll call, even if the area code is the same as yours. Today these calls can be carried by your local exchange telephone company or your long distance company.

Types of Service (cont'd.)

Some local telephone companies offer an optional bundle of local exchange and local toll service for a single monthly fee.

- **Expanded Local Exchange Service**

Expanded local exchange service extends a local exchange calling area and eliminates local toll costs; however, you may see expanded local exchange service as a surcharge on your telephone bill.

Because local exchange service, local toll service, and expanded local exchange service usually involve calls within a state, they are usually regulated by your state public service commission. If you have a problem regarding these services, you can find contact information for your state public service commission at

www.naruc.org/commissions.cfm. You may also contact your state consumer protection agency, Better Business Bureau, or state Attorney General’s office to learn about the protections and remedies available to you as a consumer of intrastate telephone service. You can find contact information for these organizations in the blue pages or government section of your local telephone directory.

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Types of Service (cont'd.)

• Long Distance Toll (interLATA) Service

Long distance toll (interLATA) service includes all calls outside the local exchange and local toll service areas, calls that originate in one LATA and terminate in another, and international calls. Long distance toll calls can be between two LATAs in the same state, such as a call from San Diego to San Francisco, or between LATAs in different states. Long distance toll service includes international service, except in Hawaii, where international service is separate from long distance service. When purchasing long distance toll service, remember to specifically ask whether international calls are included in monthly long distance calling plans.

Filing a Complaint with the FCC

The FCC regulates long distance toll service between states and international service. If you have a problem with your long distance toll or international service, first try to resolve it with the provider. If you are unable to resolve it directly, you can file a complaint with the FCC. There is no charge for filing a complaint. You can file your complaint using an on-line complaint form found at esupport.fcc.gov/complaints.htm. You can also file your complaint with the FCC's Consumer Center by e-mailing fccinfo@fcc.gov; calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY; faxing 1-866-418-0232; or writing to:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554.

What to Include in Your Complaint

The best way to provide all the information the FCC needs to process your complaint is to complete fully the on-line complaint form. When you open the on-line complaint form, you will be asked a series of questions that will take you to the particular section of the form you need to

What to Include in Your Complaint (cont'd.)

complete. If you do not use the on-line complaint form, your complaint, at a minimum, should indicate:

- your name, address, e-mail address, and phone number where you can be reached;
- the telephone and account numbers that are the subject of your complaint;
- the names and phone numbers of any companies involved with your complaint;
- the amount of any disputed charges, whether you paid them, whether you received a refund or adjustment to your bill, the amount of any adjustment or refund you have received, an explanation if the disputed charges are related to services in addition to residence or business telephone services; and
- any additional details or information relevant to your complaint.

Equal Access and Slamming

Equal access allows telephone subscribers to choose an authorized telephone company or companies to handle their local toll and long-distance toll (including international) calls from their traditional, wireline telephones. Where equal access is available, subscribers may choose separate authorized telephone companies for each of these services or one authorized telephone company for both of them. Subscribers can place local toll and long distance toll calls using their authorized telephone company or companies by dialing 1 (or 011 for international calls) plus the appropriate code and telephone number. Subscribers can place calls using other telephone companies by dialing a 1010XXX access code. Subscribers can change their authorized telephone company or companies at any time, but may be charged for doing so.

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Equal Access and Slamming (cont'd.)

Wireless telephone companies are not required to provide equal access, and generally choose an authorized telephone company for their subscribers. If wireless companies allow use of "dial-around" 1010XXX access codes, they can choose to charge their customers a fee for doing so.

The FCC has adopted detailed "slamming" rules to prevent telephone companies from switching subscribers from one authorized telephone company to another without authorization. To learn more about the FCC's slamming rules, go to www.fcc.gov/slamming.

If you have been slammed, first try to resolve your problem with the telephone company that slammed you. Then call your authorized telephone company and tell it that you want to be reinstated to the same service you had before the slam.

You can also file a complaint. Depending on where you live, you will either file with your state or with the FCC. You can find a list of states that accept slamming complaints at www.fcc.gov/slamming.

If your state accepts slamming complaints, your state public service commission or Attorney General's office can advise you on the appropriate filing procedures.

If your state does not handle slamming complaints, you may file a complaint with the FCC. You can file your complaint using the on-line complaint form found at esupport.fcc.gov/complaints.htm; e-mailing slamming@fcc.gov; faxing 202-418-0035; or writing to:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
ATTN SLAM TEAM, Room CY-A257
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554.

What to Include in Your Slamming Complaint

The best way to provide all the information needed for the FCC to process your slamming complaint is to complete fully the on-line complaint form. When you open the on-line complaint form, you will be asked a series of questions that will take you to the particular section of the form you need to complete. **If you file your complaint using the on-line form or by sending an e-mail, you must attach an electronic copy of any bill you are complaining about to the on-line form or the e-mail.**

If you do not use the on-line complaint form, your complaint, at a minimum, should indicate:

- your name, address, and daytime phone number;
- the phone number that was allegedly slammed;
- the name of the phone company that you are complaining about;
- the name of your authorized **local** phone company;
- the name of your authorized **long distance** (including international) phone company;
- the amount of the charges you dispute and whether you paid them; and
- a brief statement of facts.

REMEMBER: You MUST include a copy of any bill you are complaining about. Please indicate on the copy of any bill the name of the unauthorized phone company and the disputed charges.

If you have questions about filing your slamming complaint, you can contact the FCC's Consumer Center using the contact information provided for filing a complaint about problems with your long distance toll or international service.

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For More Information

For information about other telecommunications issues, visit the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau Web site at www.fcc.gov/cgb, or contact the FCC's Consumer Center using the information provided for filing a complaint.

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For this or any other consumer publication in an accessible format (electronic ASCII text, Braille, large print, or audio), please write or call us at the address or phone number below, or send an e-mail to FCC504@fcc.gov.

To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, visit www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/.

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