

Consumer Connections

Brought to you by the Consumer Affairs and Outreach Division
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau, FCC

September 2019

September is National Preparedness Month

During this month, review your disaster and emergency plan. Consider the FCC's consumer tips for emergency preparedness:

- Check landline back-up batteries.
- Fully charge mobile phones, devices, batteries and portable rechargers.
- Back up computer data and print out important personal emergency information.
- Note local emergency and non-emergency numbers.
- Ask local public safety officials if the 911 call center in your area supports text-to-911.
- Consider buying a battery-operated, solar powered or hand-cranked radio or portable TV.

For more about emergency communications, visit www.fcc.gov/emergency



Left to Right: Chantal Virgile (FCC), Keyla Hernandez-Ulloa (FCC), Michelle Vetterkind (WI Broadcasters Association) and Alma Hughes (FCC).

Midwest Rural Tour

From June 24 – 28, 2019, representatives from the Federal Communications Commission visited communities in Minnesota and Wisconsin as part of the Midwest Rural Tour. This tour was the fourth in a series of trips designed to build partnerships with local community leaders, and to hear concerns directly from the public. The trip included nine public events and five non-public meetings with local officials.

Events were held at venues such as City Halls, community centers, senior centers, and libraries, in order to facilitate interactive discussions.

FCC representatives provided community leaders with educational materials to distribute to their constituents. At public-facing events, FCC representatives provided valuable information regarding pressing issues like illegal robocalls, the ongoing broadcast transition, recent telecom scams and more. Event attendees were able to voice their concerns, providing FCC representatives with valuable first-hand accounts.

This trip was a testament to the fact that telecommunication issues impact every American, from young to old. A highlight of the trip was a presentation to teenagers at the Portage Public Library in Wisconsin that provided pertinent tips regarding distracted driving and online safety. At the Chaska Senior Center in Minnesota, FCC representatives offered advice on avoiding malicious phone scams and spoofed calls that seek to steal personal identification and financial information.

The FCC is eager to get back out on the road and connect with more Americans across the country. For more information, email us at outreach@fcc.gov.

Events

Consumer Advisory Committee Meeting

([Public Notice](#))

September 16, 2019;
9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. EDT

Disability Advisory Committee Meeting

([Event page](#))

September 24, 2019;
9:00 am EDT

Open Commission Meetings

September 26, 2019

([Event page](#))

10:30 am - 12:30 pm EDT

October 25, 2019

([Event page](#))

10:30 am - 12:30 pm EDT

All FCC Events:

fcc.gov/events

Broadcast Transition Information

Did you know that some TV stations may be changing frequencies in your market?

If you watch TV with an antenna, remember to rescan!

Phase 5 began 8/3/2019 and ended 9/11/2019.

Phase 6 began 9/7/2019 and ends 10/18/2019.

Phase 7 begins 10//19/2019 and ends 1/17/2020.

More info including a map that allows viewers to insert an address to see the frequency change timeframe for most local channels:

fcc.gov/TVrescan

TV Rescan Assistance Consumer Call Center:

1-888-CALL-FCC; Press 6



Scam Jam attendees visiting the FCC Information Table for consumer handouts.

AARP Scam Jam in Moorhead, MN

In June, AARP Minnesota and the Better Business Bureau (BBB) of Minnesota and North Dakota hosted a Scam Jam in Moorhead, MN - a fraud prevention event aimed at educating seniors and caregivers about recent scams impacting their community. Rebecca Lockhart of the FCC's Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau presented information about robocalls and spoofing including helpful consumer tips on how to prevent becoming a victim of telephone scams. Senator Tina Smith shared remarks via a video message specifically for Scam Jam attendees. Jay Happala, AARP Minnesota; Gary Johnson, BBB of Minnesota and North Dakota; and Marit Anne Peterson, Minnesota Elder Justice Center presented information and shared helpful resources

including the [AARP Fraud Watch Network](#) and the [BBB Scam Tracker](#). Several area organizations provided information to approximately 200 attendees at the resource fair.

Check out the newly launched [FCC Scam Glossary](#) to stay updated on the current robocall and spoofing scams impacting consumers. The Glossary includes brief scam descriptions and links to detailed information.

Updates in the Fight Against Robocalls

In June, the FCC passed a Declaratory Ruling to make clear that phone providers can block, by default, illegal and unwanted phone calls for consumers based on reasonable analytics. Check with your provider today to see if they offer this service either by request or automatically. [Learn more here.](#)

In July, Chairman Pai hosted a summit to assess the progress that voice service providers have made towards implementing SHAKEN/STIR caller ID authentication framework. SHAKEN/STIR offers standards to ensure call validation before calls reach consumers. Implementation of these standards can offer relief to consumers from illegal and persistent robocalls. The Chairman set a deadline for major voice service providers to set these standards in place by the end of 2019. After reviewing the information shared at the summit, the Chairman is optimistic that this deadline will be met. [Learn more here.](#)

In August, the FCC passed a Report and Order which banned malicious spoofing of text messages and foreign robocalls through closing loopholes in the Truth in Caller ID Rules. This Order implemented anti-spoofing provisions of the RAY BAUM'S Act. Consumers now have increased protections from scams delivered through text messages, and from robocalls that originate from call centers in foreign countries. [Learn more here.](#)

FCC Calls Out Cramming Concerns

If an unauthorized or unfamiliar charge appears on your phone bill, you may have been the victim of phone bill cramming. Cramming occurs when illegal charges are placed on a consumer's wireline, wireless, or bundled services telephone bill. These charges are either unauthorized, meaning that the consumer did not give permission to receive the charge, or

Join us for our Monthly Consumer Information Call!

Starting September 10, 2019, CAOD will host a monthly conference call every second Tuesday of the month to provide information on topics of interest.

Upcoming Calls:

October 8, 2019
2:00 p.m. EDT

Topics:

- [Cramming](#)
- [Disaster Relief Scams](#)

To RSVP and for phone bridge information email outreach@fcc.gov.

FCC Consumer Help Center
fcc.gov/consumers

FCC Consumer Complaint Center
consumercomplaints.fcc.gov

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If you have questions about consumer issues and outreach at the FCC or recommendations for this newsletter, please contact outreach@fcc.gov

Visit CAOD's Webpage:
fcc.gov/outreach

they are deceptive in nature. Deceptive charges try to confuse the consumer by charging for services the consumer did not receive or cost more than the consumer was led to believe.

The FCC is vigilant in its response to consumer complaints regarding cramming issues. Recently, the [FCC Enforcement Bureau recently reached a \\$550,000 settlement](#) with Internet service provider CenturyLink to resolve an investigation into the company's cramming activities. Going forward, CenturyLink will end third-party billing and strengthen its customer's ability to dispute unauthorized charges through implementing a compliance plan.

Follow these tips to protect yourself from cramming:

- Carefully review your telephone bill every month.
- Ask yourself the following questions as you review your telephone bill:
 - Do I recognize the names of all the companies listed on my bill?
 - What services were provided by the listed companies?
 - Does my bill include charges for calls I did not place or services I did not authorize?
 - Are the rates and line items consistent with the rates and line items that the company quoted to me?
- Pay attention to small charges. Cramming often goes undetected as very small mystery charges" – sometimes only \$1, \$2, or \$3 – to thousands of consumers.
- Keep a record of the services you have authorized and used.
- Carefully read all forms and promotional materials – including the fine print – before signing up for telephone or other services to be billed on your phone bill.

Take the following actions if you believe you have been the victim of cramming:

- Call the phone company responsible for your bill.
- Call the company that charged you.
- If neither the telephone company sending you the bill nor the company that provided the service in question will remove charges you consider to be incorrect, you can file a complaint:
 - With [the FCC](#) about any charges on your telephone bill, whether they relate specifically to telephone service or to other products or services that appear on your bill;
 - With your state public service commission for telephone services within your state; or
 - With the [Federal Trade Commission](#) about charges for non-telephone services on your telephone bill.

Learn more by reading our [consumer guide](#) or [download](#) this useful infographic.

Chairman's Awards for Advancements in Accessibility



Chairman Pai (left) with the Winners of the Chairman's AAA.

The Chairman's Awards for Advancement in Accessibility awarded two recipients for their innovative initiatives that serve people with disabilities in their telecommunications and technological needs. Awardees were honored at a ceremony held at the M-Enableing Conference on June 18, 2019. Microsoft, Tobii, and EyeTech were awarded for their USB Human Interface Device Standard for Eye Trackers. Cisco was awarded for its 'Text to Speech' Functionality for 8800 Series Phones. Read more about the winners [here](#), and read Chairman Pai's remarks [here](#).