



Cable Signal Leakage

Cable television systems use radio frequency, or RF, signals to provide television, telephone and broadband Internet services to customers. These RF signals normally do not cause interference when cable systems comply with FCC rules for limiting interference, but the signals can “leak.” Cable signal leaks occur when the RF signals transmitted within a cable system are not properly contained. Signal leaks can be caused by loose connectors, damaged equipment or cables, or cables that are unterminated (not connected to a device, panel or wall outlet).

Why is it important to determine leakage?

Cable television systems and licensed broadcasters use many of the same frequencies to transmit programming. Cable signal leakage can interfere with any of the over-the-air services using the same frequencies as the cable operator within the vicinity of the cable system.

Cable systems use broadcast TV, radio, aeronautical radio (Federal Aviation Administration), and other channels. Cable operators are considered secondary users of these frequencies and must not interfere with primary use.

What are the FCC rules governing signal leakage?

The FCC sets maximum individual signal leakage levels for cable systems, with more stringent limits on systems that may interfere with aeronautical and navigation communications. Cable operators must have a periodic, ongoing program to inspect, locate and repair leaks.

Does a cable operator need to come into my home to monitor for signal leakage?

Cable operators can use equipment to locate the general area of a leak. To pinpoint a leakage source for repair, the cable operator may request access to your home. Homeowners may deny access to their premises, but if a leak cannot be repaired without access, the cable operator can disconnect your service.

Can my cable operator terminate my service because of signal leakage?

Cable operators can disconnect service in order to repair signal leakage that exceeds FCC standards, but may not charge you for service while disconnected.

Is the cable operator responsible for repairing signal leakage on subscriber-owned equipment?

No.

Can I hook up a second TV set myself?

Yes, but because the cable operator is responsible for leakage from the wiring, the operator can either refuse to connect to it or terminate service if the hook up causes signal leakage.

Is signal leakage biologically harmful?

The power levels used in cable systems are generally lower than broadcast TV stations, so it is unlikely that cable signal leakage will exceed the FCC's guidelines for exposure to RF emissions that are considered harmful.

Filing a complaint

You have multiple options for filing a complaint with the FCC:

- File a complaint online at consumercomplaints.fcc.gov
- By phone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322); ASL: 1-844-432-2275
- By mail (please include your name, address, contact information and as much detail about your complaint as possible):

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
45 L Street NE
Washington, DC 20554

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