

Call Splashing: Long-Distance Calling from a Public Phone

When you place a long-distance call from a public phone – such as a payphone, hotel, or airport phone – using a calling card or access code for long-distance service you subscribe to, there's a chance it may be routed to a distant call center before being handed off to your long-distance company. As a result, you might be billed as if your call originated from the distant call center rather than the actual location, with a higher long-distance rate than you expected.

This practice is known as “call splashing.”

Is it legal?

A telephone company is permitted to base charges on an alternative point of origination if you:

- Request a transfer to a different company's operator
- Are informed (before incurring any charges) that the call may be billed as if it originated elsewhere
- Consent to the transfer

Avoid being splashed

- Listen carefully to the telephone operator and don't consent to any call transfers unless you understand what the operator is asking.
- Carefully read your phone bill to ensure the origination and destination locations of your long-distance phone calls are correct.
- If your call has been billed at a higher rate without your consent, file a complaint with your long-distance company.
- If you are unable to resolve the matter with your long-distance company, you can file a complaint with the FCC.

Filing a complaint

You have multiple options for filing a complaint:

- File a complaint online at <https://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

Alternate formats

To request this article in an accessible format - braille, large print, Word or text document or audio - write or call us at the address or phone number at the bottom of the page, or send an email to fcc504@fcc.gov.

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