When Your Telephone Company Discontinues Service

The FCC's discontinuance rules help to prevent telephone companies from abruptly discontinuing, reducing, or impairing wireline telecommunications service without proper notice, for any reason including bankruptcy. The rules, which also apply to interconnected Voice-over Internet Protocol (VoIP) service, are designed to protect you from an abrupt change or termination of service and to allow you time to arrange for service with another provider.

Consumer notice requirements for changes to phone service

U.S. providers planning to discontinue, reduce, or impair domestic wireline or VoIP service generally are required to:

- Notify affected customers in writing about any such plans and inform them of their right to file comments with the FCC.
- Request permission from the FCC after notifying customers.
- Continue to provide service for a certain period of time after the FCC releases a public notice announcing and seeking comment on the service provider's proposal – typically ranging between 31 days and 60 days depending on the alternative services that will be available to you. The FCC can extend the termination date.

International telephone service providers must notify customers 30 days in advance.

Filing objections to changes with the FCC

If you object to a provider's plan to discontinue, reduce, or impair service, you can respond to the FCC's public notice, which will include a docket number, procedures, and a deadline for filing comments. The FCC will consider objections and other comments when evaluating the provider's request.

The FCC usually authorizes a provider's request unless customers are unable to receive similar services or a reasonable substitute from another provider.

Options if your service is transferred

If a telephone service provider sells or transfers its customer base to another company, FCC rules say:

- The acquiring company must provide customers 30 days' advance notice of the transfer, including rate and service information.
- Customers may opt to stay with the acquiring company or choose another company.

If your account has been transferred to an acquiring company without adequate notice, you may be covered by the FCC's slamming rules. Learn more at fcc.gov/slamming.

Federal Communications Commission · Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau · 45 L Street NE, Washington, DC 20554
1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) · TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) · www.fcc.gov/consumer-governmental-affairs-bureau

Wireless service

The FCC's discontinuance rules generally do not apply to wireless services, but if a wireless provider discontinues, reduces, or impairs your service without cause or notice, leaving you without alternative telephone service, you can file a complaint with the FCC.

Filing a complaint

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

- 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

You can also contact your state public utility commission or a consumer protection agency. State laws may offer additional protections for wireless and VoIP services. Check the government section or blue pages of your local telephone directory for contact information.

Alternate formats

To request this article in an alternate 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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