



NEWS

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

News Media Information 202 / 418-0500
Internet: <http://www.fcc.gov>

This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See *MCI v. FCC*, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 11, 2015

NEWS MEDIA CONTACT:
Neil Grace, 202-418-0506
E-mail: neil.grace@fcc.gov

FCC FINES OPTIC INTERNET PROTOCOL \$7.6 MILLION FOR ILLEGALLY BILLING CUSTOMERS AND SWITCHING THEIR PHONE COMPANIES

Long Distance Carrier Relied on Fabricated “Authorization” Recordings

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission has fined Optic Internet Protocol, Inc., an Alpharetta, GA telephone company, \$7,620,000 for changing consumers’ long distance carriers without their authorization (“slamming”), placing unauthorized charges for service on consumers’ telephone bills (“cramming”), and submitting fabricated audio recordings as “proof” that consumers had authorized the company to switch their carriers.

“Consumers should be able to count on companies not to load their phone bills with phony charges” said Travis LeBlanc, Chief of the Enforcement Bureau. “The FCC will enforce the law to the fullest extent possible to stop companies from taking advantage of consumers by switching their telephone carriers and placing charges on their telephone bills without authorization.”

The Enforcement Bureau reviewed more than 150 complaints against Optic that consumers filed with the Commission, the Federal Trade Commission, state regulatory agencies, and the Better Business Bureau. Consumers complained that Optic switched their long distance service provider without their authorization, and that they had never heard of or spoken to the company before discovering charges on their telephone bills. Consumers also complained that the company told them that they or someone in their household had authorized the service, when in fact no one had done so. It appears Optic fabricated audio recordings to “prove” that consumers authorized changes in their services, played these bogus recordings for consumers and produced them for law enforcement; the recordings, however, did not in any way relate to the consumers at issue.

With today’s action, the Commission has now taken nearly 30 enforcement actions for cramming or slamming in the past five years. These actions have announced more than \$90 million in penalties, and are slated to return more than \$200 million to consumers.

For more information about the FCC’s rules protecting consumers from unauthorized charges on phone bills, see the FCC consumer guide, *Cramming – Unauthorized, Misleading, or Deceptive Charges Placed on Your Telephone Bill*. For information about other communications issues, visit the FCC’s Consumer website, or contact the FCC’s Consumer Center by 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 by writing to:

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

The Forfeiture Order is available at: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-15-27A1.pdf

The Notice of Apparent Liability is available at: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-14-101A1.pdf

-FCC-