

Protecting Your Privacy and Personal Information

In today's environment where numerous entities collect and store personal information, you want to be assured in the knowledge that your personal information is secure. The FCC has a number of regulatory programs in place to protect your privacy.

Protecting the privacy of your telephone calling records

Your local, long distance and wireless phone companies, as well as IP service providers, collect customer proprietary network information, such as the numbers you call and when you call them, as well as the particular services you use, such as call forwarding or voice mail. Telephone companies may use, disclose, or permit access to this information in these circumstances:

- As required by law.
- With your approval.
- In providing the service from which the customer information was obtained.

Your telephone company may only release your customer information to you upon request, with certain protections, such as a password if your request is by phone or online, or with valid photo identification if your request is in person. Additionally, your telephone company must:

- Notify you immediately when it creates or changes a password, a back-up for a forgotten password, an online account or an address of record.
- Obtain your approval to use your customer information for marketing, outside of enhancements to services you already use.
- Keep accurate records regarding disclosure of your customer information to third parties and your approvals.
- Submit to the FCC an annual summary of all consumer complaints received regarding unauthorized release of customer information and certify they are compliant with FCC rules.

How to help prevent unauthorized disclosure of your customer information

- Ask your service provider to provide information about what it does to protect the confidentiality of your customer information.
- Read your telephone bill and any other notices you receive from your company carefully. Determine if your company is seeking opt-in or opt-out permission to use or share your customer information for marketing.
- Make your choice about sharing your customer information clear to your provider. The choice you make about how your customer information is used and shared is valid until you inform your company that your choice has changed.
- If you use a password when contacting your service provider to obtain your customer information, avoid using any sensitive or readily apparent information, such as your social security number.

Remember: Customer information rules apply to all telephone companies: local, long distance, wireless and VoIP. Make your customer information choices known to each company.

Protecting your caller ID privacy

The FCC's caller ID rules require telephone companies to make available, at no cost to you, simple and uniform per-line blocking and unblocking processes that prevent your telephone number from being transmitted to parties

you call that subscribe to caller ID service. These processes give you the choice of showing or blocking your telephone number for any interstate calls you make.

FCC rules require telemarketers to display on caller ID either their phone numbers and, if possible, their names or the name of the company for which they are selling products. The display must include a phone number that you can call during regular business hours to ask that the company no longer call you. This rule also applies even if the company making the call has an established business relationship with you.

For more information about the FCC's caller ID rules, see the FCC's consumer guide at www.fcc.gov/guides/caller-id-and-spoofing.

Privacy requirements for cable subscriber records

Subscription to cable television service requires cable providers to collect information from you necessary to bill you for services, such as your address, the services you subscribe to and any pay-per-view transactions. Your cable provider is required to notify you when you begin service, and at least once annually after you begin service, about any such personally identifiable information that it will collect, and must tell you:

- The scope, frequency and purpose of personal information collected.
- The period during which information will be maintained.
- The times and places at which the subscriber may access their personal information.
- Any limitations placed on the cable operator by federal, state or local authorities regarding collection and disclosure of personal information, as well as your rights to enforce the limitations.

Cable operators must provide you access to your personal records at reasonable times and at a convenient place, and give you reasonable opportunities to correct any errors.

Finally, your provider may not disclose any of this information without your written permission. If you are compromised by your cable provider's violation of any of these requirements, you may sue your cable provider in federal court.

For more information about FCC rules regarding cable company public records retention and availability, see the FCC's consumer guide at www.fcc.gov/guides/cable-companies-record-retention-cable-subscriber-privacy.

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
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Accessible formats

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