

Slamming: Switching Your Authorized Telephone Company Without Permission

"Slamming" is the illegal practice of switching a consumer's traditional wireline telephone company for local, local toll, or long distance service without permission. The FCC's slamming liability rules also prohibit unreasonable delays in the execution of an authorized switch by your local telephone company. The rules provide a remedy if you've been slammed, discourage slamming by removing the profit and protect consumers from illegal switches. The FCC's Enforcement Bureau can also take action against slammers.

How to protect yourself against slamming

- *Always examine your telephone bill immediately and thoroughly.* If you see a new telephone company name on your bill, call the number that's shown on that portion of the bill and ask for an explanation.
- *Be aware of the methods telephone companies can use to change your authorized telephone company legally.* FCC rules require telephone companies to obtain your clear permission to make such a change.
- *Be sure you understand that switching long distance service also means switching international service.* Ask whether any international calling plans you have with your current long distance company will be offered by the new company.
- *Ask your local telephone company to place a "freeze" on your account* to keep anyone other than you from changing your authorized telephone company selection. Your written or verbal authorization is required to remove the freeze.

What to do if you've been slammed

If your authorized telephone company has been switched without your permission

- Call the slamming company and tell it that you want the problem fixed and, under FCC rules, don't have to pay for the first 30 days of its service.
- Call your authorized company to inform it of the slam, and that you want to be switched back with the same calling plan you had before the slam.
- Also, tell your authorized local telephone company that you want all charges for switching companies removed from your bill.

If you have been slammed but HAVE NOT paid the bill of the slamming company, you DO NOT have to pay the slamming company for up to 30 days after being slammed. You also do not have to pay your authorized telephone company for any charges for up to 30 days. After 30 days, you must pay your authorized company for service, but at its rates, not the slammer's rates.

If you have been slammed, but discover it after you HAVE paid the bill of the slamming company, the slamming company must pay your authorized company 150 percent of the charges you paid the slamming company. Out of this amount, your authorized company will reimburse you 50 percent of the charges you paid the slamming company. Or, you can ask your authorized company to recalculate and resend your bill using its rates instead of the slamming company's rates.

Authorized switching methods

Your telephone service cannot legally be switched from your existing authorized telephone company to a new company unless the new company verifies the switch by one of the following methods:

- Using an independent third party to verify your oral authorization to switch.
- Obtaining your signature on a letter that indicates, in writing, that you want to switch authorized telephone companies.
- Providing a toll-free number that you can call to confirm the order to switch authorized telephone companies.

Filing a slamming complaint

The Communications Act and FCC rules hold telephone companies responsible for the acts of their agents, including their telemarketers.

If you live in Alaska, Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Missouri, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin or the Virgin Islands, you can file a slamming complaint with the FCC. You have multiple options for filing:

- 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

You must include a copy of any bill you are complaining about. Please indicate on the copy of the bill the name of the slamming telephone company and the disputed charges.

Public service commissions in all other states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico process slamming complaints arising within those jurisdictions. If you live in a state or territory that processes slamming complaints, check the website of its public service commission for information on filing a complaint.

Accessible formats

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