

Telcommunications Dictionary



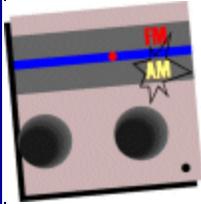
A Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau Publication

CGB



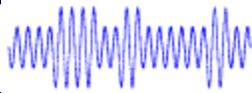
Access Charges:

This is a fee charged by local phone companies for use of their networks.



Amplitude Modulation (AM) *that's the "AM" Band on your Radio:*

A signaling method that varies the amplitude of the carrier frequencies to send information. The carrier frequency would be like 910 (kHz) AM on your AM dial. Your radio antenna receives this signal and then decodes it and plays the song.



Analog Signal:

A signaling method that modifies the frequency by amplifying the strength of the signal or varying the frequency of a radio transmission to convey information.



Bandwidth

The amount of data passing through a connection over a given time. It is usually measured in bps (bits-per-second) or Mbps.



Broadband

Broadband refers to telecommunication in which a wide band of frequencies is available to transmit information. More services can be provided through broadband in the same way as more lanes on a highway allow more cars to travel on it at the same time.



Broadcast

To transmit (a radio or television program) for public or general use. In other words, send out or communicate, especially by radio or television.



Cable

A strong, large-diameter, heavy steel or fiber rope. The **word history** of cable derives from Middle English, from Old North French, from Late Latin *capulum*, *lasso*, from Latin *capere*, meaning *to seize*.



Calling Party Pays

A billing method in which a wireless phone caller pays only for making calls and not for receiving them. The standard American billing system requires wireless phone customers to pay for all calls made and received on a wireless phone.



Cellular Technology:

This term, often used for all wireless phones regardless of the technology they use, derives from cellular base stations that receive and transmit calls. Both cellular and PCS phones use cellular technology.



Closed Captioning:

A service for persons with hearing disabilities that translates television program dialog into written words on the television screen.



Common Carrier:

In the telecommunications arena, the term used to describe a telephone company.



Communications Assistant:

A person who facilitates telephone conversation between text telephone users, users of sign language or individuals with speech disabilities through a Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS). This service allows a person with hearing or speech disabilities to communicate with anyone else via telephone at no additional cost.



Community Antenna Television (CATV):

A service through which subscribers pay to have local television stations and additional programs brought into their homes from an antenna via a coaxial cable.



Cramming

Cramming refers to the addition of charges for unauthorized services to a consumer's phone bill. The term was coined to express the idea that such additions are hidden or "crammed" in obscure fashions within consumers' bills so that they are difficult to notice.



Dial-Around:

Long distance services that require consumers to dial a long distance provider's access code (like a "10-10" number) before dialing a long distance number to bypass or "*dial around*" the consumer's chosen long distance carrier in order to get a better rate.



Digital Television:

A new technology for transmitting and receiving broadcast television signals. DTV provides clearer resolution and improved sound quality.



Direct Broadcast Satellite (DBS/DISH)

A high-powered satellite that transmits or retransmits signals which are intended for direct reception by the public. The signal is transmitted to a small earth station or dish (usually the size of an 18-inch pizza pan) mounted on homes or other buildings.



E-Mail:

Short for electronic mail. It is a system for sending and receiving messages electronically over a computer network, as between personal computers.



En Banc:

An informal meeting held by the FCC to hear presentations on specific topics by diverse parties. The Commissioners, or other officials, question presenters and use their comments in considering FCC rules and policies on the subject matter that is under consideration.



Enhanced Service Providers:

A for-profit business that offers to transmit voice and data messages and simultaneously adds value to the messages it transmits. Examples include telephone answering services, alarm/security companies and transaction processing companies.



Fax:

A fax machine is used to transmit (printed matter or an image) by electronic means. The **word history** of fax is short for facsimile Latin fac simile make similar; a system of transmitting and reproducing graphic matter (as printing or still pictures) by means of signals sent over telephone lines.



Frequency Modulation (FM) *that's the "FM" Band on your Radio.*

A signaling method that varies the carrier frequency as a method to send information. The carrier frequency would be like 97.7 (MHz) FM on your FM dial. Your radio antenna receives this signal and then decodes it and plays the song.



Global Positioning System (GPS):

A US satellite system that lets those on the ground, on the water or in the air determine their position with extreme accuracy.

High Definition Television (HDTV):

An improved television system which provides approximately twice the vertical and horizontal resolution of existing television standards. It also provides audio quality approaching that of compact discs.



Interactive Video Data Service (IVDS):

A communication system, operating over a short distance, that allows nearly instantaneous two-way responses by using a hand-held device at a fixed location. Viewer participation in game shows, distance learning and e-mail on computer networks are examples.



Instructional Television Fixed Service (ITFS):

A service provided by one or more fixed microwave stations operated by an educational organization and used to transmit instructional information to fixed locations.



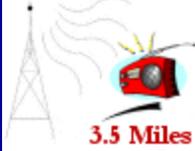
Landline:

Traditional wired phone service.



Land Mobile Service:

A public or private radio service providing two-way communication, paging and radio signaling on land.



Low Power FM Radio (LPFM):

A broadcast service that permits the licensing of 50-100 watt FM radio stations within a service radius of up to 3.5 miles and 1-10 watt FM radio stations within a service radius of 1 to 2 miles.



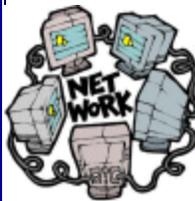
Low Power Television (LPTV):

A broadcast service intended to provide opportunities for locally-oriented television service in small communities, both rural communities and individual communities within larger urban areas.



Must-Carry (Retransmission):

A 1992 Cable Act term requiring a cable system to carry signals of both commercial and noncommercial television broadcast stations that are "local" to the area served by the cable system.



Network:

Any connection of two or more computers that enables them to communicate. Networks may include transmission devices, servers, cables, routers and satellites. The phone network is the total system for transmitting phone messages.



Number Portability:

A term used to describe the capability of individuals, businesses and organizations to retain their existing telephone number(s) -- and the same quality of service -- when switching to a new local service provider.



Operator Service Provider (OSP):

A common carrier that provides services from public phones, including payphones and those in hotels/motels.



Paging System:

A one-way mobile radio service where a user carries a small, lightweight miniature radio receiver capable of responding to coded signals. These devices, called "pagers," emit an audible signal, vibrate or do both when activated by an incoming message.



Personal Communications Service (PCS):

Any of several types of wireless, voice and/or data communications systems, typically incorporating digital technology. PCS licenses are most often used to provide services similar to advanced cellular mobile or paging services. However, PCS can also be used to provide other wireless communications services, including services that allow people to place and receive communications while away from their home or office, as well as wireless communications to homes, office buildings and other fixed locations.



Radio:

Originally radio was a general prefix used for wireless telegraphy or "radio-telegraphy" using Morse code in the very early 1900s (before 1915). This referred to the wireless signal's ability to radiate out in all directions. Eventually, compound terms such as "radio-telegraphy" and "radio-telephony" were shortened to just "radio".



Roaming:

The use of a wireless phone outside of the "home" service area defined by a service provider. Higher per-minute rates are usually charged for calls made or received while roaming. Long distance rates and a daily access fee may also apply.



Satellite:

During the Decline of the Roman Empire, the rich and important were under constant threat. To protect themselves from attack they hired bodyguards, called *satelles*. The practice, and the name, spread and by the 1600's every prince had his satellites revolving around him wherever he went. Now we refer to any object orbiting another primary mass as a satellite.



Satellite Home Viewer Improvement Act of 1999 (SHVIA):

An Act modifying the Satellite Home Viewer Act of 1988, SHVIA permits satellite companies to provide local broadcast TV signals to all subscribers who reside in the local TV station's market. SHVIA also permits satellite companies to provide "distant" network broadcast stations to eligible satellite subscribers.



Satellite Master Antenna Television (SMATV):

A satellite dish system used to deliver signals to multiple dwelling units (e.g., apartment buildings and trailer parks.)



Scanner:

A radio receiver that moves across a wide range of radio frequencies and allows audiences to listen to any of the frequencies.



Service Plan:

The rate plan you select when choosing a wireless phone service. A service plan typically consists of a monthly base rate for access to the system and a fixed amount of minutes per month.



Service Provider:

A telecommunications provider that owns circuit switching equipment.



Slamming:

The term used to describe what occurs when a customer's long distance service is switched from one long distance company to another without the customer's permission. Such unauthorized switching violates FCC rules.



Soap Opera:

A drama, typically performed as a serial on daytime television or radio, characterized by stock characters and situations, sentimentality, and melodrama. The **word history** of soap opera derives from the fact that they were originally sponsored by soap companies.



Spamming:

When someone sends electronic junk mail (e-mail), with many copies of the same message to lots of Internet users.

Spectrum:

The range of electromagnetic radio frequencies used in the transmission of sound, data, and television.



Subscriber Line Charge (SLC):

A monthly fee paid by telephone subscribers that is used to compensate the local telephone company for part of the cost of installation and maintenance of the telephone wire, poles and other facilities that link your home to the telephone network. These wires, poles and other facilities are referred to as the "local loop." The SLC is one component of access charges.



Telecommunications:

Communicating information, including data, text, pictures, voice and video over long distance.



Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS):

A free service that enables people with TTYs, individuals who use sign language and people who have speech disabilities to use telecommunications services by having a third party transmit and translate the call.



Telephone:

An instrument that converts voice and other sound signals into a form that can be transmitted to remote locations and that receives and reconverts waves into sound signals. The word history of the telephone derives from tele- and -phone. Tele- is from the Greek combining form tele- or tel-, a form of tele, meaning "afar, far off," while -phone is from Greek phone, "sound, voice."



Telephony:

The word used to describe the science of transmitting voice over a telecommunications network.



Television:

The word "TV" is short for "television" which is made up of two words, "tele" and "vision." "Tele" is a word that means "from a far away place" and "vision" means "something that you see." So if you stick the two words together you figure out that the word television means "a machine that sends you sound and pictures from a far away place."



TTY:

A type of machine that allows people with hearing or speech disabilities to communicate over the phone using a keyboard and a viewing screen. It is sometimes called a TDD.



Unbundling:

The term used to describe the access provided by local exchange carriers so that other service providers can buy or lease portions of its network elements, such as interconnection loops, to serve subscribers.



Universal Service:

The financial mechanism which helps compensate telephone companies or other communications entities for providing access to telecommunications services at reasonable and affordable rates throughout the country, including rural, insular and high costs areas, and to public institutions.



Very High Frequency (VHF):

The part of the radio spectrum from 30 to 300 megahertz, which includes TV Channels 2-13, the FM broadcast band and some marine, aviation and land mobile services.



Video Description:

An audio narration for television viewers who are blind or visually disabled, which consists of verbal descriptions of key visual elements in a television program, such as settings and actions not reflected in the dialog. Narrations are inserted into the program's natural pauses, and are typically provided through the Secondary Audio Programming channel.