

Background

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has rules that ensure consumers are able to reach their preferred long distance telephone company or companies from public telephones, hotel phones, or other telephones served by operator service providers (OSPs). These rules also apply to telephones in public areas at correctional institutions, such as telephones located in visitation areas. The rules do not apply, however, to telephones used only by inmates. In most cases, inmates using "inmate-only" telephones are only allowed to make collect calls and do not have a right to access a preferred long distance telephone company. Additional restrictions, such as limits on the number of calls, call duration, or and calling hours apply to "inmate-only" telephones and may influence rates for calls from these telephones.

Identifying Rates for Collect Calls from Prisons

FCC rules require that, when an inmate places a collect call, each OSP must identify itself to the person receiving the call before connecting the call. Each OSP must also disclose, before connecting the call, how the receiving party may obtain rate quotations. Additionally, the OSP must permit the receiving party to terminate the telephone call at no charge before the call is connected. These rules apply only to interstate (between states) OSP calls. Most states, however, have similar rules for intrastate OSP calls.

Complaints – Where to File

To complain about rates for intrastate (within a state) collect calls from public phones in prisons, contact the state public utility commission in the state where the call originated and terminated. State public utility commission addresses may be found at www.naruc.org/commissions.cfm or in the blue pages or government section of your local telephone directory. To complain about interstate and international rates, file a complaint with the FCC. There is no charge for filing a complaint with the FCC.

Filing a Complaint with the FCC

You can file your complaint using an FCC on-line complaint form found at <http://esupport.fcc.gov/complaints.htm>. You can also file your complaint with the FCC's Consumer Center by e-mailing fccinfo@fcc.gov; 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 writing to:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554.

What to Include in Your Complaint

The best way to provide all the information needed for the FCC to process your complaint is to complete fully the on-line complaint form. When you open the on-line complaint form you will be asked a series of questions that will take you to the particular section of the form you need to complete. If you do not use the on-line complaint form, your complaint, at a minimum, should indicate:

- your name, address, e-mail address, and phone number where you can be reached;

(More)



What to Include in Your Complaint (cont'd.)

- telephone and account numbers that are the subject of your complaint;
- names and phone numbers of any companies involved with your complaint;
- amount of any disputed charges, whether you paid them, whether you received a refund or adjustment to your bill, the amount of any adjustment or refund you have received, an explanation if the disputed charges are related to services in addition to residential or business telephone services; and
- details of your complaint and any additional relevant information.

For More Information

For information about other telecommunications issues, visit the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau Web site at www.fcc.gov/cgb, or contact the FCC's Consumer Center using the information provided for filing a complaint.

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For this or any other consumer publication in an accessible format (electronic ASCII text, Braille, large print, or audio) please write or call us at the address or phone number below, or send an e-mail to FCC504@fcc.gov.

To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, click on www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/.

This document is for consumer education purposes only and is not intended to affect any proceeding or cases involving this subject matter or related issues.

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