

# Cable Signal Leakage

## FCC Consumer Facts

### Background

Cable television systems use radio frequency (RF) signals transmitted over cables to provide television and data services to customers. Normally, these RF signals do not cause interference when cable systems comply with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules for limiting interference. Occasionally, however, cable television system signals can “leak.” Cable signal leaks occur when the RF signals transmitted within a cable system are not properly contained within the cable plant. Cable signal leaks can be caused by loose connectors, cracked or unterminated cables, and damaged plant.

### Why Is It Important to Determine Leakage?

Cable television systems and licensed over-the-air broadcasters use many of the same frequencies to transmit programming. Specifically, cable systems use TV, radio, and aeronautical radio channels, among others, within their cable plant. Cable operators are considered the secondary users of these frequencies; therefore they must not interfere with the licensed over-the-air users who are the protected (primary) users of these frequencies.

### What Problems Can Signal Leakage Cause?

Cable signal leakage can interfere with any of the over-the-air services that happen to be using the same frequencies as the cable operator and that are within the vicinity of the cable system. Such interference, especially on the emergency channels, can interfere with the communications of safety personnel or airplane pilots. When such interference occurs, it can endanger the lives or hamper the rescue efforts of safety personnel.

### What Are the FCC Rules Governing Signal Leakage?

The FCC has set maximum individual signal leakage levels for cable systems. The FCC sets even more stringent limits for cable systems that may interfere with aeronautical and navigation communications. As a further measure, the FCC requires cable operators to have a periodic, on-going program to inspect, locate, and repair leaks on their systems.

### Does a Cable Operator Need to Come into My Home to Monitor for Signal Leakage?

Usually, no. Cable operators can use equipment to locate the general area of a leak. To pinpoint a leakage source for subsequent repair, however, the cable operator may request access to your home.

### Am I Required to Let the Cable Operator into My Home to Monitor for and Repair Signal Leakage?

Homeowners have the right to deny access to their premises. If a leak cannot be repaired without access to your home, however, a cable operator can disconnect your service for denied access.

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## Can My Cable Operator Terminate My Service Because of Signal Leakage?

The FCC's rules allow cable operators to disconnect service in order to repair signal leakage that exceeds FCC standards. The operator restores service when the signal leakage problem is remedied, and may not charge you for service while it is disconnected.

## Is the Cable Operator Responsible for Repairing Signal Leakage on Subscriber-owned Equipment?

No.

## Can I Hook Up a Second Set Myself?

In terms of the signal leakage rules, yes, but because the cable operator is responsible for leakage from the wiring, the operator can either refuse to connect to it or terminate service if the hook up causes signal leakage problems.

## Is Signal Leakage Biologically Harmful?

The power levels used in a cable system are low. Therefore, it is unlikely that cable signal leakage from a cable facility will exceed the FCC's RF allowable limits for RF exposure.

## Filing a Complaint with the FCC

If you experience interference that you think may be caused by signal leakage, first try to resolve the problem with your cable operator. If you cannot resolve the problem directly, you can file a complaint with the FCC. There is no charge for filing a complaint. You can file your complaint using the on-line complaint Form 2000D found at [www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html). You can also file your complaint with the FCC's Consumer Center by e-mailing [fccinfo@fcc.gov](mailto: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:

## Filing a Complaint with the FCC (cont'd.)

Federal Communications Commission  
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau  
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554.

## What to Include in Your Complaint

The best way for you to provide all the information the FCC needs to process your complaint is to complete fully the on-line complaint Form 2000D. If you do not use the on-line complaint Form 2000D, your complaint, at a minimum, should indicate:

- your name, address, e-mail address, and phone number where you can be reached;
- the name and phone number of the company that you are complaining about and location (city and state) if the company is a cable or satellite operator;
- television station call sign (WZUE), TV channel (13), and location (city and state);
- date, time, and description of incident if your complaint is about interference to emergency or public safety services or devices or compliance with Emergency Alert System requirements;
- manufacturer's name and address, model number, retailer name and address, and description of incident if your complaint is about interference to emergency or public safety services or devices from a piece of equipment;

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

- tower owner, address or location of tower, and description of problem if your complaint is about problems with a wireless or broadcast tower;
- details about any other emergency or public safety problem, including date, time, nature of problem, and identifying information for any companies, organizations, or persons involved.

## For More Information

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

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