

FCC Consumer Advisory

Call Splashing

What Is Call Splashing?

When you place a long distance call from a public phone (a payphone, hotel, or airport phone, for example), your call may be routed to a distant call center before being “handed off” to your preferred long distance company. Your preferred long distance company might then, either unintentionally or intentionally, bill you as if your call originated from the distant call center, rather than from your actual location. As a result, you may be charged higher long distance rates for the call than you expected. This is called “call splashing,” and it may be in violation of Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules.

Is Call Splashing Legal?

A telephone company is permitted to base charges on an artificial point of origination if the caller:

- requests to be transferred to a different company’s operator;
- is informed (before incurring any charges) that the call may be billed as if it originated somewhere other than where the caller is calling from; and
- he/she consents to the transfer.

Avoid Being “Splashed”

To help avoid call splashing, listen carefully to the telephone operator and don’t consent to any call transfers unless you understand what the operator is asking. Carefully read your phone bill to ensure the origination and destination locations of your long distance phone calls are correct. If your phone call has been billed without your consent as if the call originated from a distant call center, and the rate is higher than you anticipated, complain to your preferred long distance company so you can receive the correct billing rate.

Filing a Complaint with the FCC

If you are unable to resolve the matter with your preferred long distance company, you can file a complaint with the FCC. There is no charge for filing a complaint. You can file your complaint using an online complaint form found at www.fcc.gov/complaints. You can also file your complaint with the FCC’s Consumer Center by calling

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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 the FCC needs to process your complaint is to complete fully the online complaint form. When you open the online 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 online complaint form, your complaint, at a minimum, should indicate:

- your name, address, email address and phone number where you can be reached;
- the telephone and account numbers that are the subject of your complaint;
- the names and phone numbers of any companies involved with your complaint;
- the 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 residence or business telephone services; and
- the 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 website at www.fcc.gov/consumer-governmental-affairs-bureau, 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 email to FCC504@fcc.gov.

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

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

