

Don't Get Slammed



How to respond when your telephone company is changed without your consent

Slamming is Illegal

“Slamming” is the illegal practice of changing your telephone company without your knowledge or consent. Both federal and state rules prohibit slamming.

You have the right to use any long distance carrier you choose. You can make separate choices of companies to provide local long distance and long distance service. You may also have a choice of local service providers.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires companies to obtain your authorization in order to change your phone company. That authorization must be either with a written document known as a “Letter of Agency,” oral verification by an independent third party, or by providing a toll-free number that the consumer can call to confirm the order to switch telephone companies.

You're Protected by the State

In addition to federal protections, Wisconsin laws and rules prohibit slamming. They also prohibit deceptive and unfair sales tactics and require a telephone carrier to notify consumers in writing that service is being provided.

Six Tips to Avoid Getting Slammed

- 1. Read the fine print:** Never sign anything without reading it carefully.
- 2. Just say “No”:** If you receive a phone call about long distance service and you're not interested in switching your service, tell the caller that you're not interested in receiving their service.
- 3. Write a letter:** If you receive a postcard or letter "verifying" that you have switched services, notify them in writing that you did not authorize the change, then call your local telephone company and confirm that you are still with your preferred carrier.

4. Read all about it: Read your phone bill carefully every month. If your calls are being billed by a company you're not familiar with, call the company listed for those charges on the bill.

5. "PIC freeze" it: Ask your local telephone company if they are able to "PIC freeze" your long distance choice. This limits the changes which can be made without your written permission or a call by you to your local phone company.

If you decide to change carriers at a later time, you must first have the PIC freeze removed. Your local long distance and long distance carrier selections must have the PIC freeze added individually.

6. Check it out: To verify the name of your current long distance carrier, call 1-(your area code)-700-4141. To find out the name of your current long distance carrier, call 1-700-555-4141. A recording will give you the name of your long distance company. You have a right to choose a different company for each of these services. Both of these calls are free.

What to do if you Get Slammed

Call the slamming company. Call the company that slammed you and tell them to disconnect you from their service. If you haven't paid, tell them that you will not pay for the first 30 days of service. If you have paid, the slammer must refund 150% of the charges it received from you to your authorized carrier. That company will then reimburse you 50% of the charges you paid to the slammer.

Reconnect. Call the long distance company you were switched from to report the slam. Tell them that you want to be reinstated to the same calling plan you had before the slam. Any switch charges should be billed to the slamming company.

Call your local telephone company. Request to be reconnected to your long distance company. Tell them that you want all "change charges" (for switching companies) removed from your bill. Request a PIC freeze to prevent future unauthorized changes.

Report it. Slamming is illegal, and many companies have been fined. Reporting will also help protect you if the slamming company doesn't do what is required after you call them to disconnect you.

Who Can Help?

You can report to:

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

(800) 422-7128

(608) 224-5058 TTY

datcpHotline@datcp.state.wi.us

<http://datcp.state.wi.us>

Federal Communications Commission

(888) 225-5322

(888) 835-5322 TTY

www.fcc.gov

Public Service Commission

Although the PSC does not regulate slamming directly, it can help you get in touch with the right places. See contact information below.

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin is an independent state agency that oversees more than 1,100 Wisconsin public utilities that provide natural gas, electricity, heat, steam, water and telecommunication services.



Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53707-7854
Telephone: 608-266-5481
Toll free: 888-816-3831
Consumer affairs: 608-266-2001 / 800-225-7729
TTY: 608-267-1479 / 800-251-8345
Fax: 608-266-3957
Website: <http://psc.wi.gov>

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