

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)	
)	
Sprint Communications Company)	IC Nos. 03-S84835
)	03-S84845
Complaints Regarding)	03-S84863
Unauthorized Change of)	03-S84869
Subscriber's Telecommunications Carrier)	03-S85010
)	03-S85092
)	03-S85106
)	03-S85117
		03-S85135
		03-S85136
		03-S85184
		03-S85310
		03-S85333
		03-S85340
		03-S85346
		03-S85377
		03-S85382
		03-S85394
		03-S85395
		03-S85434
		03-S85487
		03-S85489
		03-S85515
		03-S85516
		03-S85654

ORDER

Adopted: October 26, 2004

Released: October 28, 2004

By the Deputy Chief, Consumer Policy Division, Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau:

1. In this Order, we consider the complaints¹ alleging that Sprint Communications Company (Sprint) changed Complainants' telecommunications service providers without obtaining authorization and verification from Complainants in violation of the Commission's rules.² We conclude that Sprint's actions did result in an unauthorized change in Complainants'

¹ See Appendix A.

telecommunications service providers and we grant Complainants' complaints.

2. In December 1998, the Commission released the *Section 258 Order* in which it adopted rules to implement Section 258 of the Communications Act of 1934 (Act), as amended by the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (1996 Act).³ Section 258 prohibits the practice of "slamming," the submission or execution of an unauthorized change in a subscriber's selection of a provider of telephone exchange service or telephone toll service.⁴ In the *Section 258 Order*, the Commission adopted aggressive new rules designed to take the profit out of slamming, broadened the scope of the slamming rules to encompass all carriers, and modified its existing requirements for the authorization and verification of preferred carrier changes. The rules require, among other things, that a carrier receive individual subscriber consent before a carrier change may occur.⁵ Pursuant to Section 258, carriers are absolutely barred from changing a customer's preferred local or long distance carrier without first complying with one of the Commission's verification procedures.⁶ Specifically, a carrier must: (1) obtain the subscriber's written or electronically signed authorization in a format that meets the requirements of Section 64.1130 authorization; (2) obtain confirmation from the subscriber via a toll-free number provided exclusively for the purpose of confirming orders electronically; or (3) utilize an independent third party to verify the subscriber's order.⁷

3. The Commission also has adopted liability rules. These rules require the carrier to absolve the subscriber where the subscriber has not paid his or her bill. In that context, if the subscriber has not already paid charges to the unauthorized carrier, the subscriber is absolved of

(Continued from previous page)

² See 47 C.F.R. §§ 64.1100 – 64.1190.

³ 47 U.S.C. § 258(a); Telecommunications Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-104, 110 Stat. 56 (1996); *Implementation of the Subscriber Carrier Selection Changes Provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996; Policies and Rules Concerning Unauthorized Changes of Consumers' Long Distance Carriers*, CC Docket No. 94-129, Second Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making, 14 FCC Rcd 1508 (1998) (*Section 258 Order*), *stayed in part*, *MCI WorldCom v. FCC*, No. 99-1125 (D.C. Cir. May 18, 1999); First Order on Reconsideration, 15 FCC Rcd 8158 (2000); *stay lifted*, *MCI WorldCom v. FCC*, No. 99-1125 (D.C. Cir. June 27, 2000); Third Report and Order and Second Order on Reconsideration, 15 FCC Rcd 15996 (2000), Errata, DA No. 00-2163 (rel. Sept. 25, 2000), Erratum, DA No. 00-2192 (rel. Oct. 4, 2000), Order, FCC 01-67 (rel. Feb. 22, 2001); Third Order on Reconsideration and Second Further Notice Proposed Rule Making, 18 FCC Rcd 5099 (2003); Order, FCC 03-116, (rel. May 23, 2003). Prior to the adoption of Section 258, the Commission had taken various steps to address the slamming problem. See, e.g., *Policies and Rules Concerning Unauthorized Changes of Consumers' Long Distance Carriers*, CC Docket No. 94-129, Report and Order, 10 FCC Rcd 9560 (1995), *stayed in part*, 11 FCC Rcd 856 (1995); *Policies and Rules Concerning Changing Long Distance Carriers*, CC Docket No. 91-64, 7 FCC Rcd 1038 (1992), *reconsideration denied*, 8 FCC Rcd 3215 (1993); Investigation of Access and Divestiture Related Tariffs, CC Docket No. 83-1145, Phase I, 101 F.C.C.2d 911, 101 F.C.C.2d 935, *reconsideration denied*, 102 F.C.C.2d 503 (1985).

⁴ 47 U.S.C. § 258(a).

⁵ See 47 C.F.R. § 64.1120(b).

⁶ 47 U.S.C. § 258(a).

⁷ See 47 C.F.R. § 64.1120(c). Section 64.1130 details the requirements for letter of agency form and content for written or electronically signed authorizations. 47 C.F.R. § 64.1130.

liability for charges imposed by the unauthorized carrier for service provided during the first 30 days after the unauthorized change.⁸ Where the subscriber has paid charges to the unauthorized carrier, the Commission's rules require that the unauthorized carrier pay 150% of those charges to the authorized carrier, and the authorized carrier shall refund or credit to the subscriber 50% of all charges paid by the subscriber to the unauthorized carrier.⁹ Carriers should note that our actions in this Order do not preclude the Commission from taking action, if warranted, pursuant to section 503 of the Act.¹⁰

4. We received Complainants' complaints alleging that Complainants' telecommunications services providers had been changed from their authorized carriers to Sprint without Complainants' authorization.¹¹ Pursuant to Sections 1.719 and 64.1150 of our rules,¹² we notified Sprint of the complaints and Sprint responded.¹³ Sprint states that authorization was received and confirmed through signed letters of agency (LOAs). Sprint's LOAs, however, were not dated by the subscribers as required by our rules.¹⁴ Sprint has failed to produce clear and convincing evidence that Complainants authorized a carrier change.¹⁵ Therefore, we find that Sprint's actions resulted in an unauthorized change in Complainants' telecommunications service providers and we discuss Sprint's liability below.¹⁶

5. Sprint must remove all charges incurred for service provided to Complainants for the first thirty days after the alleged unauthorized change in accordance with the Commission's liability rules.¹⁷ We have determined that Complainants are entitled to absolution for the charges incurred during the first thirty days after the unauthorized change occurred and that neither the authorized carriers nor Sprint may pursue any collection against Complainants for those

⁸ See 47 C.F.R. §§ 64.1140, 64.1160. Any charges imposed by the unauthorized carrier on the subscriber for service provided after this 30-day period shall be paid by the subscriber to the authorized carrier at the rates the subscriber was paying to the authorized carrier at the time of the unauthorized change. *Id.*

⁹ See 47 C.F.R. §§ 64.1140, 64.1170.

¹⁰ See 47 U.S.C. § 503.

¹¹ See Appendix A.

¹² 47 C.F.R. § 1.719 (Commission procedure for informal complaints filed pursuant to Section 258 of the Act); 47 C.F.R. § 64.1150 (procedures for resolution of unauthorized changes in preferred carrier).

¹³ See Appendix A.

¹⁴ See 47 C.F.R. § 64.1130(b).

¹⁵ See 47 C.F.R. § 64.1150(d).

¹⁶ If a Complainant is unsatisfied with the resolution of this complaint, such Complainant may file a formal complaint with the Commission pursuant to Section 1.721 of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. § 1.721. Such filing will be deemed to relate back to the filing date of such Complainant's informal complaint so long as the formal complaint is filed within 45 days from the date this order is mailed or delivered electronically to such Complainant. See 47 C.F.R. § 1.719.

¹⁷ See 47 C.F.R. § 64.1160(b).

charges.¹⁸ Any charges imposed by Sprint on the subscriber for service provided after this 30-day period shall be paid by the subscriber to their respective authorized carrier at the rates each subscriber was paying to its respective authorized carrier at the time of the unauthorized change.¹⁹

6. Accordingly, IT IS ORDERED that, pursuant to Section 258 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. § 258, and Sections 0.141, 0.361 and 1.719 of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. §§ 0.141, 0.361, 1.719, the complaints filed by Complainants²⁰ against Sprint ARE GRANTED.

7. IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that, pursuant to Section 64.1170(d) of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. § 64.1170(d), Complainants are entitled to absolution for the charges incurred during the first thirty days after the unauthorized change occurred to the relevant Complainant and neither the authorized carrier nor Sprint may pursue any collection against Complainants for those charges.

8. IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this Order is effective upon release.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Nancy A. Stevenson, Deputy Chief
Consumer Policy Division
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau

¹⁸ See 47 C.F.R. § 64.1160(d).

¹⁹ See 47 C.F.R. §§ 64.1140, 64.1160.

²⁰ See Appendix A.

APPENDIX A

<u>INFORMAL COMPLAINT NUMBER</u>	<u>DATE OF COMPLAINT</u>	<u>DATE OF CARRIER RESPONSE</u>
03-S84835	August 21, 2003	October 24, 2003
03-S84845	September 3, 2003	October 17, 2003
03-S84863	August 27, 2003	October 17, 2003
03-S84869	August 28, 2003	February 4, 2004
03-S85010	September 16, 2003	February 4, 2004
03-S85092	September 24, 2003	February 4, 2004
03-S85106	September 22, 2003	February 4, 2004
03-S85117	September 9, 2003	February 5, 2004
03-S85135	October 2, 2003	January 6, 2004
03-S85136	October 2, 2003	February 5, 2004
03-S85184	October 6, 2003	February 5, 2004
03-S85310	October 6, 2003	February 5, 2004
03-S85333	October 20, 2003	February 9, 2004
03-S85340	October 20, 2003	December 3, 2003
03-S85346	October 20, 2003	February 5, 2004
03-S85377	October 14, 2003	January 16, 2004
03-S85382	October 15, 2003	January 6, 2004
03-S85394	October 27, 2003	January 6, 2004
03-S85395	October 27, 2003	December 19, 2003
03-S85434	October 17, 2003	December 19, 2003
03-S85487	November 5, 2003	January 23, 2004
03-S85489	October 28, 2003	January 6, 2004
03-S85515	October 28, 2003	December 19, 2003
03-S85516	October 30, 2003	March 2, 2004
03-S85654	November 4, 2003	January 23, 2004