

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

In the Matter of)	
)	
Sprint Communications Company)	IC Nos. 03-S85316
)	03-S85327
Complaints Regarding)	03-S85360
Unauthorized Change of)	03-S85374
Subscriber's Telecommunications Carrier)	03-S85413
		03-S85499
		03-S85501
		03-S85548
		03-S85617
		03-S85626
		03-S85712
		03-S85733
		03-S85738
		03-S85761
		03-S85767
		03-S85774
		03-S85826
		03-S85828
		03-S85838
		03-S85842

ORDER

Adopted: March 3, 2005

Released: March 7, 2005

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 not result in an unauthorized change in Complainants' telecommunications service providers and we deny 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

¹ See Appendix A.

² See 47 C.F.R. §§ 64.1100 – 64.1190.

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) obtains 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 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

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 Company v. FCC*, No. 99-1125 (D.C. Cir. May 18, 1999); First Order on Reconsideration, 15 FCC Rcd 8158 (2000); *stay lifted*, *MCI Company 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 Report and Order and Second Order on Reconsideration, 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.

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.

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.*

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 additional action, if warranted, pursuant to section 503 of the Act.¹⁰

4. We received Complainants' complaints alleging that Complainants' telecommunications service providers had been changed 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 third party verifications or signed letter of agency. We find that Sprint has produced clear and convincing evidence of a valid authorized carrier change by Complainants.¹⁴ Therefore, we find that Sprint's actions did not result in an unauthorized change in Complainants' telecommunications service.¹⁵

5. 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 ARE DENIED.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

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

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. § 64.1150(d).

¹⁵ 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.

APPENDIX A

<u>INFORMAL COMPLAINT NUMBER</u>	<u>DATE OF COMPLAINT</u>	<u>DATE OF CARRIER RESPONSE</u>
03-S85316	October 21, 2003	January 6, 2004
03-S85327	October 26, 2003	December 12, 2003
03-S85360	October 22, 2003	December 5, 2003
03-S85374	October 16, 2003	December 12, 2003
03-S85413	October 31, 2003	January 23, 2004
03-S85499	November 11, 2003	December 23, 2003
03-S85501	October 31, 2003	December 23, 2003
03-S85548	November 13, 2003	January 23, 2004
03-S85617	November 12, 2003	January 19, 2004
03-S85626	November 18, 2003	January 23, 2004
03-S85712	November 13, 2003	January 19, 2004
03-S85733	December 4, 2003	February 6, 2004
03-S85738	December 4, 2003	January 30, 2004
03-S85761	November 24, 2003	January 23, 2004
03-S85767	November 24, 2003	January 26, 2004
03-S85774	November 25, 2003	January 23, 2004
03-S85826	December 19, 2003	March 12, 2004
03-S85828	December 15, 2003	February 6, 2004
03-S85838	December 11, 2003	February 13, 2004
03-S85842	December 17, 2003	March 12, 2004