

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

In the Matter of
Telplex Communications
Complaint Regarding
Unauthorized Change of
Subscriber's Telecommunications Carrier
Complaint No. 3657907

ORDER

Adopted: March 4, 2020

Released: March 4, 2020

By the Chief, Consumer Policy Division, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau:

1. In this Order, we consider a complaint alleging that Telplex Communications (Telplex) changed Complainant's telecommunications service provider without obtaining authorization and verification from Complainant as required by the Commission's rules. We find that Telplex has responded to the Complainant's complaint and has taken action to resolve the complaint.

2. Section 258 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended (the Act), 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. The Commission's implementing rules require, among other things, that a carrier receive individual subscriber consent before a carrier change may occur. Specifically, a carrier must: (1) obtain the subscriber's written or electronically signed authorization in a format that satisfies our rules; (2) obtain confirmation from the subscriber via a toll-free number provided exclusively for the purpose of confirming orders electronically; or (3) utilize an appropriately qualified independent third party to verify the order. The Commission also has adopted rules to limit the liability of subscribers when an unauthorized carrier change occurs, and to require carriers involved in slamming practices to compensate subscribers whose carriers were changed without authorization.

3. We received Complainant's complaint alleging that Complainant's telecommunications

1 See Informal Complaint No. 3657907 (filed Nov. 13, 2019); see also 47 CFR §§ 64.1100 – 64.1190.

2 47 U.S.C. § 258(a).

3 See 47 CFR § 64.1120.

4 See id. § 64.1120(c). Section 64.1130 details the requirements for letter of agency form and content for written or electronically signed authorizations. Id. § 64.1130.

5 These rules require the unauthorized carrier to absolve the subscriber where the subscriber has not paid his or her bill. 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. See id. §§ 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. Where the subscriber has paid charges to the unauthorized carrier, the Commission's rules require that the unauthorized carrier pay 150 percent of those charges to the authorized carrier, and the authorized carrier shall refund or credit to the subscriber 50 percent of all charges paid by the subscriber to the unauthorized carrier. See id. §§ 64.1140, 64.1170.

service provider had been changed without Complainant's authorization.⁶ In the complaint, Complainant states that his restaurant's phone line was damaged in an earthquake several months earlier. Complainant also alleges that Telplex came into his restaurant, misrepresented themselves as AT&T, and "had an employee sign a paper stating that they were approving work to be done to get his service back up."⁷ He did not realize his service had been switched to Telplex and states that he never approved a change of his carrier.⁸

4. Pursuant to our rules, we notified Telplex of the complaint.⁹ Telplex responded to the complaint, stating that authorization was received and confirmed through a third-party verification (TPV) recording.¹⁰ Telplex provided a copy of the TPV and asserts that the TPV shows that Complainant's employee agreed to switch to Telplex and that "the real crux of the complaint . . . is that the employee was not authorized to switch service to Telplex."¹¹ Telplex states that Complainant's service has been ported back to AT&T.¹²

5. Based on the information provided by Telplex, it appears that Telplex has fully absolved Complainant of all charges assessed by Telplex in a manner consistent with the Commission's liability rules.¹³ We therefore find that the complaint referenced herein has been resolved.¹⁴

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 CFR §§ 0.141, 0.361, 1.719, the complaint filed against Telplex Communications IS RESOLVED.

⁶ See Informal Complaint No. 3657907.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ 47 CFR § 1.719 (Commission procedure for informal complaints filed pursuant to section 258 of the Act); *id.* § 64.1150 (procedures for resolution of unauthorized changes in preferred carrier).

¹⁰ See Telplex Response to Informal Complaint No. 3657907 (filed Dec. 24, 2019).

¹¹ *Id.* Telplex argues that it "is not required to guarantee the actual authority of every person claiming to have the authority to authorize a service change."

¹² *Id.*

¹³ See 47 CFR § 64.1160.

¹⁴ If Complainant is unsatisfied with the resolution of the complaint, the Complainant may file a formal complaint with the Commission pursuant to section 1.721 of the Commission's rules, 47 CFR § 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 *id.* § 1.719.

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

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Kurt A. Schroeder
Chief
Consumer Policy Division
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau