

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

In the Matter of)
)
Clear Rate Communications) Complaint No. 5957279
)
Complaint Regarding)
Unauthorized Change of)
Subscriber’s Telecommunications Carrier)

ORDER

Adopted: January 23, 2023

Released: January 24, 2023

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

1. In this Order, we consider a complaint alleging that Clear Rate Communications (Clear Rate) changed Complainant’s telecommunications service provider without obtaining authorization and verification from Complainant as required by the Commission’s rules.1 We find that Clear Rate 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.2 The Commission’s implementing rules require, among other things, that a carrier receive individual subscriber consent before a carrier change may occur.3 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.4 The Commission has also 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.5

3. We received Complainant’s complaint alleging that Clear Rate had changed Complainant’s telecommunications service provider without Complainant’s authorization. Pursuant to

1 See Informal Complaint No. 5957279 (filed Jan. 9, 2023); 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.

our rules, we notified Clear Rate of the complaint.⁶ Clear Rate responded, stating that the Complainant had agreed to and authorized the carrier switch.⁷ It also provided two audio recordings—a third party verification recording (TPV) and a recording Clear Rate characterized as a “quality assurance call.” The Division listened to each recording and determined that although the TPV complied with the verification requirements in the slamming rules, the person on the TPV is not the person on the “quality assurance call.”⁸

4. Based on all of the information provided by Complainant and Clear Rate, it appears that Clear Rate has fully absolved Complainant of all charges assessed by Clear Rate in a manner consistent with the Commission’s liability rules.⁹ We therefore find that the complaint referenced herein has been resolved.¹⁰

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

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

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Kristi Thornton
Acting Chief
Consumer Policy Division
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau

⁶ *Id.* § 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).

⁷ *See* Clear Rate Response to Informal Complaint No. 5957279 (filed Jan. 12, 2023) (*Clear Rate Response*); *see also* 47 CFR § 64.1160.

⁸ In addition, Clear Rate’s bills for service were addressed to Complainant’s husband who is deceased.

⁹ *See Clear Rate Response* at 2 (stating that Clear Rate closed Complainant’s account and that the balance owed is zero).

¹⁰ 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 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 Complainant. *See id.* § 1.719.