

**REPORT OF CONSUMER INQUIRIES AND INFORMAL COMPLAINTS**  
**Fourth Quarter, Calendar Year 2013**  
**Top Consumer Issues – Subject Category Reference Guide**

**BUNDLED AND VoIP SERVICES**

**Billing and Rates:** billing and rates charged for bundled or VoIP services

**Broadband Services:** high-speed broadband access that is always on and faster than traditional dial-up access. Broadband can be provided over different platforms: Digital Subscriber Line (DSL); Cable Modem; Fiber-Optic Cable (Fiber); Wireless; Satellite; and Broadband over Power Line (BPL)

**Carrier Marketing and Advertising:** carrier advertising and marketing practices, including alleged misrepresentations

**Number Portability:** ability to port a telephone number from one service provider to another

**Service:** quality of service provided

**CABLE AND SATELLITE SERVICES**

**Billing and Rates:** billing and rates charged for program service

**Broadband:** access caps, access speeds, advertisements, availability, billing/rates, equipment, interference, and quality

**Cable Card:** a plug-in card that allows consumers to view and record digital cable television channels on digital video recorders, personal computers, and televisions without the use of other equipment, such as a set-top box provided by a cable television company

**Digital Television:** digital TV service or the transition from analog to digital TV

**Disability and Access:** video description, closed captioning, and emergency access to video programming

**Over-The-Air Reception Devices (OTARD):** installation, maintenance or use of antennas (including direct-to-home satellite dishes, TV antennas, and wireless cable antennas) used to receive video programming

**PEG/Leased Access:** public, educational, governmental access channels may be used to transmit government activities, such as city council meetings, which may be of interest to local residents. PEG channels may also be used by members of the general public and for educational purposes

**Programming:** program content or the choice of channels/programs available to subscribers

**Provider Marketing and Advertising:** provider advertising and marketing practices, including alleged misrepresentations

**Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act (STELA):** includes the Satellite Home Viewer Improvement Act of 1999 (SHVIA) and Satellite Home Viewer Extension and Reauthorization Act of 2004 (SHVERA), which was further updated under the Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act of 2010

**Service:** quality of service provided

### **RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING**

**Digital Television:** digital TV service or the transition from analog to digital TV

**Disability and Access:** video description, closed captioning, and emergency access to video programming

**Interference:** reception of unwanted signals from nearby transmitters to home electronic equipment

#### **Programming:**

- Indecency/Obscenity: obscene, indecent or profane programming
- Other: miscellaneous programming issues (*e.g.*, contests and lotteries, freedom of speech, how to start a station, journalism, false information, lists of stations)
- General Criticism: non-specific concerns regarding programming content

**Service:** availability, customer service, interruption in service

**Station Marketing and Advertising:** station advertising and marketing practices, including alleged misrepresentations

### **WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

#### **Billing and Rates:**

- **Airtime Charges:** charges to subscribers for actual time spent using a wireless phone
- **Credit/Refunds/Adjustments:** credits, refunds, or bill adjustments
- **Line Items:** surcharges and taxes appearing on a wireless bill:

- Access Charges: miscellaneous line item charges
  - E-911: provision of automatic location information and automatic number identification via a wireless phone used to contact a 911 call center
  - Taxes: taxes appearing on wireless bill
  - Universal Service Fund: availability and affordability of phone service for low income consumers in geographic areas in which the cost of providing telephone service is high
- **Recurring Charges**: recurring monthly charges that appear on a subscriber's bill
  - **Roaming Rates**: charges assessed to the subscriber for wireless calls made while roaming in another carrier's territory
  - **Rounding**: practice of rounding calls to a full minute
  - **Service Plan Rates** – terms and conditions of service:
    - Activation Fee: usually a one-time charge to initiate service
    - Off-Peak: specified period during which per-minute rate is lower
    - Optional Services: including caller-ID, voice mail, road-rescue
    - Peak: specified time during which per-minute rate is higher
    - Prepaid Service: subscriber pays for service in advance
    - Promo Plan: including minute allowances
    - Security Deposit: usually a one-time charge that is held by the carrier for a specified period required for subscriber to acquire service

**Broadband**: access caps, access speeds, advertisements, availability, billing/rates, equipment, interference, and quality

**Carrier Marketing and Advertising**: carrier advertising and marketing practices, including alleged misrepresentations

**Contract – Early Termination of Service**: termination of a subscriber's service prior to end of specified contract term:

- By Subscriber: subscriber's liability for terminating service prior to end of specified contract term
- By Carrier: carrier's right to terminate a subscriber's service prior to end of specified contract term

**Customer Premise Equipment**: any terminal and associated equipment located at a subscriber's premises and connected with a carrier's telecommunication channel(s) at the demarcation point ("demarc"). The demarc is a point established in a building or complex to separate customer equipment from telephone company equipment

#### **Equipment (EQUI)**

- Equipment Unauthorized Charges (EQUC): subscriber charged for wireless phone without agreeing to purchasing phone
- Faulty Equipment (EFAU): technical or malfunctioning equipment

- Stolen Equipment (ESTO): misuse or reporting problems associated with stolen equipment

**General Mobile Information (Land Mobile)**: wireless microphones, refarming, radar, licensing and operations, inspections, and other related issues

**Interference**: reception of unwanted signals from nearby transmitters to electronic equipment

**License Information (General)**: General Mobile Radio Services (GMRS) license acquisition, requirements, eligibility, cancellation, frequency coordination, replacement and other related issues

**Service**: quality of service or the lack of signal coverage within a geographic area served by a wireless provider

- Dead Spots: inability to receive service within certain areas
- Dropped Calls: premature termination of calls
- Home Area Service: overall quality of service within the subscriber's local calling area
- Network Busy Signal: calls that do not go through because of overcrowding of the service frequencies
- Roaming Availability: availability of service outside of the subscriber's local calling area
- Roaming Service: overall quality of service while roaming
- Service Interruption: inability to use wireless phone because service was interrupted by service provider

**Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA)**: compliance with TCPA wireless requirements

**Tower**: light outages, paint, posting, zoning and registration

**911**: charge imposed by local governments to help pay for emergency services

## **WIRELINE TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

### **Billing and Rates:**

**Credit/Refunds/Adjustments**: account credits, refunds or adjustments

**Line Items**: charges and taxes appearing on a telephone bill:

- Access – Subscriber Line Charge: subscriber local-loop line charges for maintaining residential and business and telephone access to the network
- Access – Universal Service: FCC's universal service fund-affordable access to basic telephone service for low-income consumers and consumers in high-cost

areas, and provision of communications services to schools, libraries and health care facilities

- Interstate Directory Assistance: charges assessed for access to directory assistance information
- Taxes on Telephone Bill: local, state, or federal taxes appearing on a telephone bill
- Truth-in-Billing - No Service Provider ID: the name of the service provider and/or contact information for the service provider is not easily identifiable on the bill
- Truth-in-Billing - Bundled Charges: bill fails to contain plain language description and breakdown of charges for each carrier where multiple carriers appear on the bill
- Truth-in-Billing - No Payment Solution: bill fails to clearly distinguish charges for which nonpayment will result in disconnection from those that will not result in disconnection

**Rates:** rates and charges billed by telephone companies:

- Double Billing: disputes concerning double billing for calls or services
- DSL Rate Problem: DSL promotional plan rates altered or unspecified to consumer
- International Internet Dial-up: international calls billed to subscriber as a result of using local (domestic) Internet service providers to access websites
- International Calls – Rates: international calls, rates and/or service that either originate or terminate in the U.S.
- 809 International Billing: 809 area code collect call and consumer dialing scams
- 900 Pay-Per-Call Billing: commercially provided interstate 900 number information or entertainment services
- OSP Rates: rates charged for interstate calls placed from public phones
- Rates for Interstate Telecommunications Services – Billing: disputes concerning interstate rates and charges

**Cramming:** unauthorized, misleading or deceptive charges appearing on a subscriber's bill

**Number Portability:** ability to port a telephone number from one service provider to another

**Recurring Charges:** recurring charges that appear on a subscriber's bill

**Service Quality:** quality of service provided by carrier:

- DSL Service Inadequate: poor quality of service or service outages
- Interstate Telecommunications: poor call reception, service outages, service disconnects, or carrier's failure to release telephone line (and no charges are associated)

- Long Distance Service Treatment: inadequate customer service treatment by long distance carriers including, but not limited to, additional services being added without the consumer's knowledge or approval

**Slamming**: practice of changing a subscriber's telecommunications service provider (or a calling plan) without the subscriber's consent

- International slammed: changing a subscriber's international long distance service without permission
- Local Service slammed: changing a subscriber's local or regional intrastate long distance service without permission
- Local and Long Distance slammed: changing a subscriber's local and long distance service without permission
- Long Distance slammed: changing a subscriber's interstate telephone company service without permission
- Slamming w/ Problem LOA: changing a subscriber's interstate telephone company based on fraudulent signed documents or illegal formats, such as sweepstakes

**Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA)** – compliance with TCPA:

- Do Not Call List: any telephone solicitation to a residential telephone subscriber who has requested not to receive telephone solicitations
- Unsolicited Fax: unsolicited (“junk”) faxes or the use of a computer or other device to send any messages via a telephone facsimile
- Other: other aspects of TCPA (*e.g.*, prerecorded messages, abandoned calls and war dialing, business telephone complaints, emergency telephone complaints, call or message to wireless device, and/or call or message to toll free numbers)

**Universal Service Fund Issues**: contribution methodology, general information, rural health care and calculation increases

**911**: charge imposed by local governments to help pay for emergency services