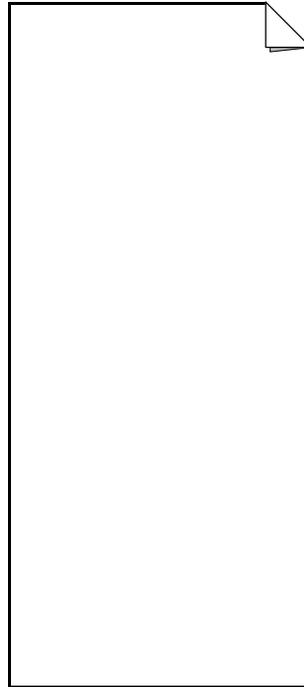


## WHOSE CALL IS IT? Don't Get Slammed

Slamming is when your in-state or inter-state long-distance carrier is switched without your agreement. This is an improper business practice, and there are specific remedies that you can pursue if this happens to you.

What do I do if it happens to me? Don't panic. In a newly competitive market, this sort of mistake is bound to occur. We suggest you pursue the following actions on a bill you believe is incorrect:

- a) Check around the house. Did a family member or housemate authorize the change? Is that person legally entitled to authorize a change in your telephone service?
- b) Call your local telephone company and let them know you have a problem with your long distance carrier. The telephone company will be able to switch you back to your old carrier at no cost and see that you pay no more for your phone calls than you would have with your old carrier.
- c) For in-state service, after calling the Company, call the Maine Public Utilities Commission's Consumer Hotline at 800-452-4699. Tell the staff person the name of the company that you believe made the unauthorized change. We track this information and will pursue carriers found to be operating in an unethical or inattentive manner.
- d) Customers who have their out of state service changed without consent should contact the Federal Communications Commission: FCC, CCB, Consumer Complaints, Mail Stop 1600A2, Washington, D.C. 20554.



Maine Public Utilities Commission  
242 State Street 18 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333-0018

## YOU MAKE THE CALL: CONSUMER CHOICE IN THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS MARKET



Maine Public Utilities Commission  
242 State Street  
18 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333-0018  
207-287-3831  
<http://www.state.me.us/mpuc/>  
E-mail: [maine.puc@state.me.us](mailto:maine.puc@state.me.us)  
TTY: 1-800-437-1220

The Maine Public Utilities Commission oversees the in-state telephone market (i.e., calls made between two places in Maine). The Commission works to ensure quality service at just and reasonable rates for local and in-state toll calls. The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) oversees the inter-state long-distance market (i.e., calls between Maine and a location outside of Maine).

All segments of the telecommunications marketplace are becoming more competitive due in large part to regulatory changes and innovations in technology. Effective competition is likely to result in lower prices and greater customer choice.

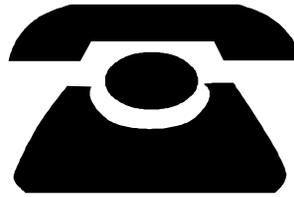
To take advantage of this market, you must make informed decisions. This is a confusing time as the market is changing dramatically, but that evolving market needs your involvement to function effectively.

Please contact us if you have questions about how you can be a more effective consumer of telecommunications services.

## CALLING A FAIR GAME: HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE TELEPHONE CONSUMER

Buying phone service is similar to buying any other service. To get the best deal, you should shop around and compare the offers of the various providers. Here are a few tips in shopping for telephone service:

**Identify your needs as a consumer** - Do you make in-state toll calls? How many and at what hours of the day and days of the week? (Many toll plans charge different prices depending on the time of day or day of the week the call is made.) How far do you usually call? (Some discounted toll plans may be available for calls made within certain geographic limits, such as within 30 miles.) Don't let the providers tell you what you need, only you know that. **Ask questions** - The consumer is in charge, and it is your right to ask the providers about their offerings before you buy anything from them. **Don't be afraid to say "NO"** - If you don't want something, say so. Saying "No" isn't rude, it is the best way to inform the salesperson that you are not interested in the product they are offering. **If you aren't sure about something, get it in writing** - If you are uncertain the telephone product or service that a salesperson is offering is the right one for you, ask them to send you the offer in writing. That way, you can compare the offer to others that you may be considering. **If you feel that you have been billed in error or otherwise deceived by a telephone company, call someone and let them know** - If you believe something is wrong with your telephone bill or service, call your telephone carrier and try to resolve the problem with them. If that fails, call, write or E-mail the Maine Public Utilities Commission at the addresses on the front of this brochure. We will work with you to resolve your problem. **If you don't like your service, change it** - You're in charge. If you don't like your service or if you think you pay too much for what you get, it is your job to change your service.



### IT'S YOUR CALL

Beginning September 15, 1997, you have been able to choose your principal in-state long distance carrier. Through a process called IntraLATA presubscription, BELL ATLANTIC customers are able to choose an in-state long distance provider in the same manner that they now choose one for their out-of-state calls. Customers of the smaller independent telephone companies will be able to make the same choice next year.

Customers have long been able to "dial around" using a five digit access code to use a carrier of their own choice, but relatively few residential or small business customers "dial around" regularly. Beginning in September, through IntraLATA Presubscription (or ILP), you can choose one company to be your principal in-state long-distance carrier. Based on the rates and service you find most attractive, you can designate any one of the more than 185 companies authorized to serve in Maine, including BELL ATLANTIC.

By presubscribing to the carrier of your choice, you can most easily make your long-distance calls through the company of your choice. Of course, you can continue as you do today, using any of the other 185 companies by dialing its 5-digit access code.

To get the best deal, you should shop around and keep informed of choices available in the market. The Maine Public Utilities Commission has telephone numbers for those companies certified to provide service in Maine, or consumers can check our web site at <http://www.state.me.us/mpuc> to view the list. You can call BELL ATLANTIC for more information at 1-800-565-4169

## CALLING ALL MAINE RESIDENTS: Lifeline and LinkUp

What is it? - Lifeline and LinkUp are two programs designed to ensure universal access to the telephone network regardless of the subscriber's income. Recognizing the importance of having a telephone for both economic and public safety reasons, the state and federal governments have combined to offer these two programs to qualifying applicants. The programs offer reduced charges for telephone service installation and basic local telephone service.

What does Lifeline mean to you? If you qualify for the program you can receive more than 50% off your monthly basic local rate. This discount is deducted from your bill each month. The discount does not apply to long distance calls or to specialized calling services. The LinkUp program provides a discount toward the service installation charges.

Residential customers who present to the telephone company satisfactory evidence of their household's current participation in any of the following programs are eligible: AFDC, Energy Assistance, Food Stamps, Family Crisis Assistance Program, Medicaid, and SSI.

How do you sign up? - Call your local phone company and let them know you want to enroll. If you are still unsure, call our Consumer Hotline at 800-452-4699 and a PUC staff person will assist you.