



Florida Public Service Commission

Consumer Bulletin

Braulio L. Baez, Chairman



SLAMMING

Every year, hundreds of Floridians are slammed. Slamming occurs when a company changes a consumer's local or long distance telephone service without permission. It may occur as the result of a contest or sweepstakes entry that authorizes change of service in very small print; it may also occur when telemarketers use deceptive or confusing language to get consumers to change their service.

In an effort to prevent this, the Public Service Commission (PSC) toughened its slamming rules in 1998 and began bringing harsher penalties against companies that continue the practice. While the penalties imposed by the PSC dramatically reduced slamming, consumers may occasionally find themselves the victim of an unauthorized switch. Florida's slamming rules are some of the most stringent in the country, and have served as a model for a number of other states as they created their own rules.

How To Avoid Being Slammed

- ◆ Check your telephone bill monthly. Make sure your phone company is listed correctly.
- ◆ Carefully read the fine print on everything. This includes any checks, offers for calling cards, sweepstakes or drawings.
- ◆ If you receive a call from a telemarketer asking you to change your long distance service, and you are happy with your current service, just say that you are not interested and hang up. Don't verify your name, your spouse's name, or your address, and never give out your Social Security number to telemarketers.
- ◆ Sign up for "No Sales Solicitation Calls" with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. This way, no one can call trying to sell you their products and/or services. Call 1-800-HELP-FLA (1-800-435-7352) or visit <http://www.800helpfla.com/nosales.html> to find out more. For Spanish translations call 1-800-352-9832. For no fee you can also sign up for the "National Do Not Call Registry" with the Federal Trade Commission at 1-888-382-1222 or visit <https://www.donotcall.gov>.

Call your local telephone company and request a Preferred Carrier or "PC" Freeze. This prohibits future changes to your account without your authorization.

What To Do If You Are Slammed

- ◆ Call your local telephone company. Let them know you did not request service from your "new" phone company and would like to be switched back to your original phone service provider. Have them remove any switching fees from your bill.
- ◆ Have your telephone company place a PC Freeze on your account. This will prevent unauthorized changes from being made to your phone service.
- ◆ Contact the company that slammed you. Insist on paying only the charges your original carrier would have imposed. Call the PSC at 1-800-342-3552 if the carrier will not adjust your charges.

If you discover your long distance service has been changed without your consent, call either your local phone company or your long distance company to be reconnected to the company of your choice at no charge. If you are not satisfied with the company's response, you may also call the PSC at 1-800-342-3552 or file an on-line complaint at www.floridapsc.com.

Braulio L. Baez is the Chairman of the Florida Public Service Commission. The PSC sets the rates regulated utility companies charge for natural gas, electric and telephone service within the state. In 36 counties, it sets the price you pay for the water you drink, if your water company is privately owned.