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Tom Miller
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Consumer Advisory Bulletin

Hang up on long distance slamming!

When you make a long distance telephone call from your home, you presume the call will go through the long distance company you selected. You may be mistaken! Unfortunately, some companies have used misleading tactics to switch a consumer's long distance service to that company without the consumer's knowledge. These deceptive service switches are commonly referred to as "slamming."

"Slamming" may occur when consumers sign up to enter contests or sweepstakes and don't read the fine print on the back side of the entry blank--fine print that says that by entering the contest, you are asking your service to be switched to another company.

"Slamming" is not only wrong, it's illegal. Federal and state authorities, including my office, are working on rules to provide greater protection to consumers against this growing problem.

But you can take action, too!

Follow these tips to avoid being tricked into switching long distance service:

- Closely review your phone bill each month for any unauthorized changes or additional fees.
- Make sure the long distance service is the one you selected.
- Beware of signing up for any free drawings for vacations or other prizes at fairs, conventions, movie theaters or restaurants.
- Remember to read the fine print on the entry blanks to make sure you are not unknowingly authorizing a switch in your long distance carrier.
- Carefully review all promotional materials you receive in the mail to ensure that you are not authorizing a switch in your long distance service by responding to an offer or by failing to respond.
- Be extremely cautious when you receive telephone solicitations asking you to switch long distance companies. If you don't want to switch, make that very clear and ask not to be called again.
- Contact your local phone company and "freeze" your long distance account. The local company will give you a form to sign and return to prevent a long distance carrier from switching your service without your authorization. Be sure you have not already been switched so that you are not "freezing" service with the wrong company.
- If your long distance carrier has been switched without your authorization, contact your local telephone company and the long distance carrier that switched you.

[[Iowa Utilities Board web site for further help.](#)]

You may also contact the Iowa Office of Consumer Advocate 310 Maple Street Des Moines, IA 50319, or by calling Phone: 515-281-5984 or Fax: 515-242-6564.

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